THE GOSPEL IN MODERN POETRY

HUGH T. KERR

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A KEEN, thoughtful analysis of some of the best modern poems and the message they bear for the religious life of our own day. Always a deeply-interesting speaker and writer, Dr. Kerr, in this book is more than usually happy in both his choice of theme and in the treatment thereof. The works of only the best known literary artists who have influenced the thought of this generation are included. The poets are the following:

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Alan Seeger
Alice Meynell
William Carruth
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Walter de la Mare
Rudyard Kipling
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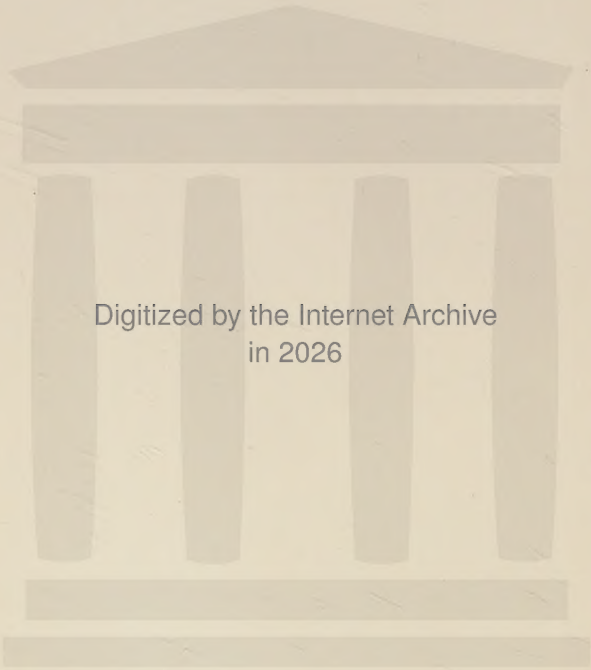

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THE GOSPEL IN MODERN POETRY

WORKS BY

HUGH T. KERR, D. D.

The Gospel in Modern Poetry.

A keen, thoughtful analysis of some of the best-known modern poems and the gospel message they bear for the life of our own day. The poems are by the following: Alice Meynell; William Carruth; Francis Thompson; Gilbert K. Chesterton; Alan Seeger; W. E. Henley; Walter De La Mare; Rudyard Kipling; Richard Le Gallienne; Joaquin Miller; Vachel Lindsay; John Masefield; Edwin Markham; Thomas Hardy; Dorothy Frances Gurney; and Cale Young Rice $1.50

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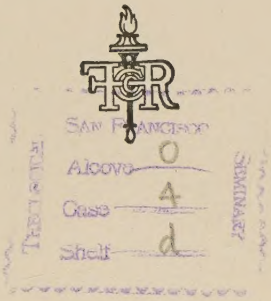
The Gospel In Modern Poetry

By
HUGH THOMSON KERR, D.D.
Pastor, Shadyside Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.



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PREFACE

DURING a never-to-be-forgotten conversation touching things secular and sacred, with the late Sir William Robertson Nicoll, in the quiet seclusion of his study, the great editor said that if he had in his keeping the training of young men for the Gospel ministry, he would cause them to study carefully Spurgeon's sermons and the Muses. Asked to interpret the significance of his remark he replied that young men needed passion and vision. Spurgeon, he said, would fire their souls and the poets would open their eyes and light up their imagination. Henry Drummond was working towards the same conclusion when he said 'the business of the preacher is not to *prove* things but to make people *see* things.' In these chapters the attempt has been made to follow the guidance of this light.

The necessity to make people 'see things' becomes a double necessity when the larger part of the preacher's audience is invisible. These addresses were all delivered over the radio through the courtesy of KDKA, the pioneer broadcasting station of the world. Messages have come from

those who have listened-in from far-distant points —from Wales and Cuba, from Canada, and light-houses in the Atlantic, from the coal-mining regions of West Virginia, and the sunny South, from the far West, and Hudson Bay posts in the frozen North. At the request of the Canadian Westinghouse Company and the Hudson's Bay Company a message was sent to the Moravian missionaries during the Christmas season,—the Moravian liturgy being used. After a lapse of a year an answering acknowledgment came, saying that the message had been received six hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle!

Each one of the addresses contained in this volume has a history, and many memories are associated with it. *The Listeners* brought responses from close to a thousand persons, nearly two-score of whom confessed to having found the Way. *I Have a Rendezvous With Death* has associated with it the memory of a message which told me that because of it, the purity and honour of a home had been maintained. To read letters which come in from one's invisible audience, is to have something of the experience of sitting in a confessional.

Not all the poets whose verses have been put to homiletic use confess to the faith which is here proclaimed. Most of them are still alive and some of these, if happening upon this volume, may

be surprised to find themselves so interpreted. Modern poetry, like modern music, is often formless and appears to have no moral objective. Indeed, much of it does not try or expect to get anywhere. The poet is merely expressing himself, as it were, and if he has within him something that is worth expressing we are the gainers. There is, however, a wistfulness about all *true* poetry. In his volume, *The Soul of Modern Poetry*, R. H. Strachan says: 'Our best modern poetry is filled with a sense of homesickness which continually breaks through the bonds that doom men to acquiescence in things as they are. It appears as a continual quest for beauty, and a continuing welcoming of it as it appears "in the stream of lovely things—the stream that flows and yet remains." The poet is animated by the same daring and imaginative faith which possessed the soul of the Hebrew poet and prophet, who, looking upon waterless Jerusalem, yet exclaimed, "Lo! a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God."'

Sometimes a poet sees farther than he understands. It is this that makes him a poet and his interpreter is justified in using his verses as windows through which to look out into the eternal where he sees the land stretching afar and the King in His beauty. Where there is beauty, the King is never far away.

Poetry is the language of the heart, the expression of the soul's deepest emotion and in the poetry of the Scriptures revealed truth is eternally wedded to the rhythm of words whose music " is the gladness of the world." Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind so that men may see the Kingdom of God.

He came and took me by the hand
Up to a red-rose tree,
He kept His meaning to Himself
But gave a rose to me.
I did not pray Him to lay bare
The mystery to me,
Enough the rose was heaven to smell,
And His own face to see.

Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania.

H. T. K.

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Saviour true;
No, I was found of Thee.

Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea,—
'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.

I find, I walk, I love, but, O the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee;
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul,
Always Thou lovedst me.

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THE author desires to express his appreciation of the courtesy extended to him by the following publishers in granting him permission to make use in this book of certain poems of which they are the holders of the copyrights.

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Alan Seeger's *I Have a Rendezvous With Death*
William E. Henley's *Invictus*
Dorothy Frances Gurney's *The Lord God Planted a Garden*

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Gilbert K. Chesterton's *The House of Christmas*

The Macmillan Company, for
Vachel Lindsay's *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven*
John Masefield's *The Everlasting Mercy*

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Cale Young Rice's *The Mystic*

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The Man With the Hoe

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William Carruth, for
Each in His Own Tongue

CONTENTS

I

THE LISTENERS 13
Walter De La Mare

II

THE SECOND CRUCIFIXION 25
Richard Le Gallienne

III

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN 37
Francis Thompson

IV

CHRIST IN THE UNIVERSE 47
Alice Meynell

V

THE HOUSE OF CHRISTMAS 57
Gilbert K. Chesterton

VI

I HAVE A RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH 66
Alan Seeger

VII

RECESSIONAL 77
Rudyard Kipling

VIII

GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH ENTERS INTO HEAVEN . 90
Vachel Lindsay

IX

INVICTUS 101
William Ernest Henley

X

EACH IN HIS OWN TONGUE 112
William Herbert Carruth

XI

THE EVERLASTING MERCY 122
John Masefield

XII

THE MAN WITH THE HOE 134
Edwin Markham

XIII

COLUMBUS 147
Joaquin Miller

XIV

THE IMPERCIPIENT 158
Thomas Hardy

XV

THE LORD GOD PLANTED A GARDEN 168
Dorothy Frances Gurney

XVI

THE MYSTIC 177
Cale Young Rice

I

THE LISTENERS

Walter de la Mare

THE assertion has often been made that the greatest of all preachers is a poet. I fear we shall have to take back that statement. We ought to say that the greatest of all preachers is a painter, and that there is no sermon comparable to a great painting. If you wish to listen to the greatest sermon ever preached upon the Cross you will not go to any volume upon the Atonement, but to Antwerp Cathedral and there gaze on Rubens' *Descent from the Cross,* and see, as if before your very eyes, the suffering and death of our Lord on Calvary. If it is a sermon on the Last Supper on the night on which He was betrayed that you seek, you will not discover the greatest exposition in any of the volumes of the saints or scholars—you will find it in the little chapel in Milan where Leonardo da Vinci outlined and painted Jesus and His disciples as they sat together for the last time and the sacramental feast was instituted. If it is a sermon on Hope you need, the hope that lasts and ultimately brings vic-

tory, you will look for it not in any large volume, for you will find it in George Frederick Watts' picture of the blindfolded girl sitting on the top of an empty world, playing upon her harp, all the strings missing but one. One of the greatest truths in the New Testament is: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me.' If you wish to discover the greatest sermon on this great text, where will you turn? Great preachers have tried their hand at it and have preached sermons that glow with living passion. George Matheson, Alexander Maclaren, George Morrison, Oswald Dykes, Joseph Parker, Bishop Ryle, Archbishop Trench, George Macdonald and Peter Taylor Forsyth have preached on this great theme. They have preached great sermons, but if you wish the greatest of all you will turn not to any book, but to the canvas of a great painter. How simple and familiar is that great text as it speaks to us, in Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World*. Everything is there, the dark night, the stillness and the silence, the closed door, the hinges massive and strong but rusty from long lack of use, the entwining vines that have crept and entered into every crack and crevice, the waiting Christ with lantern in hand, the celestial light on His face and the uplifted hand that knocks. 'See the Christ

stand'—listening, waiting, victoriously patient. The painter has made it appear as if He had been there always, but would not forever remain there knocking, waiting

> Yes, the piercèd hand still knocketh,
> And beneath the crownèd hair
> Beam the patient eyes, so tender,
> Of thy Saviour, waiting there.

The painting mirrors the message of the text exactly. Jesus is represented as standing at the door where carelessness, negligence and self-satisfaction have their abiding place, saying, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.'

If we concede that the painter is the greatest of all preachers we must still maintain that the poet is not far behind. Indeed, the poet and the painter belong to the same order and he only is great in preaching who partakes also of the same spirit. It is the spirit of the seer, the prophet, the man of vision. It would be hard to improve upon the message of any one of a number of poems that have become hymns and that sing their immortal message to the soul, such as *O Jesus, Thou Art Standing,* or *Behold a Stranger at the Door.* I do not know what Walter De La Mare had in mind when he wrote about *The Listeners.* My instructor

in English, Professor Alexander, in the University of Toronto, to whom I owe more than I can repay, writes me that he never thought of taking these lines as having any religious message. Perhaps they have not, and again perhaps they have, for if the poet had had in mind their spiritual imagery he could not have written a more appealing sermon than he has done. Here, too, we have the closed door, the darkness, the silence, and the waiting traveller in the night knocking, and knocking unavailingly:

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
'Is there anybody there?' he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.

What the painter has said the poet emphasizes, and both together proclaim the message of the closing invitation of the Bible: 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' What a drama it is! There you see the traveller, the visitor, the watcher in the night. There he stands knocking, listening, quietly, patiently listening. Somewhere, too, there is the listener. We do not see him. He is behind the closed door. Does he hear? Why does he not hear? Why does he not heed? Let us try to make the discovery. Let us think of him who knocks and of him who listens.

It is a familiar figure, this of the hand that knocks upon the door of the life. From our childhood we have ever been hearing the insistency that demands entrance into the secret places of our hearts. We have been listening to visitors who stand at the door of life, asking us to open the door and give them welcome. How insistent they are! Sometimes they knock like thunder as if they would break down all our restraint, and sometimes their knock is like the gentle touch of a little child. Everything in the world seems to demand entrance, health, yes, and disease, wealth and poverty, culture and superstition, sin and holiness, God and the devil, they all come to us saying, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'

Do you remember how the men of Sodom knocked at the door of Lot? Lot's righteous soul had vexed itself because of the sin of Sodom, but he was too weak to bar and bolt that door once and for all. Sodom was just another name for hell. It was full of all sorts of devilishness. Its women were shameless, its men were vile. Its passions were red like scarlet, and the measure of its iniquity was about full. One night Lot found all these dark and devilish things knocking at his door. There was no silencing them. They were fiends attacking the central citadel of the soul, and had it not been for the angel the door of Lot's house and all that was sacred in his soul would have fallen that night into the pit of hell. Now you know what that means. There are young men and women, yes, and older men and women, too, who are listening to that same insistent knocking. The voices of Sodom are crying out above the thunderous knocking in the darkness: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'

If that old Bible story is not familiar to some of you, perhaps the story of Macbeth has not yet faded from your memory. Macbeth had done his dark deed in the night and his hands were red with the blood of his victim. You remember the scene. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are standing together in the silence in the night alone in their

secret chamber. Macbeth's conscience is awake. He is easily startled. He hears voices.

> Methought, I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!'

It continues to cry, and then above the cry he hears a knock. To Lady Macbeth he says:

> 'Whence is that knocking?
> How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
> What hands are here! Ha! they pluck out mine eyes.'

Lady Macbeth would comfort him, but as her words run out in easy courage she, too, hears the constant knock, knock, knock, on the castle door. Shakespeare makes us hear nothing else. The words are drowned in the thunder of the knocking. He makes us understand that it is not Macduff and Lennox that are at the porter's door, but conscience all alive as from the very throne of God. There is no one who knows anything about life and his own soul that has not heard something akin to what Macbeth heard. It is a way conscience has. Perhaps, too, it is knocking at your barred door—some sin still covered, some deed done, some wrong word spoken, some nasty letter written, and when you think upon it you hear the knocking in the night.

But the Traveller of whom I desire to speak belongs, however, to another world. While it is true

that sometimes He knocks like thunder, the touch of His piercèd hand is more apt to be like that of a mother! How quiet He is! How patient He is! How willing He is! You have heard Him knocking at the door of your life. 'When have we heard Him knocking?' you say. Surely it is not necessary for me to tell you. When the old year ran out and the new took its place in the quiet of those transition moments you heard Him knock at your door. When death came and took some one you loved, again you heard His hand upon the door. As you took your little child into your arms and looked down into the face of purity and innocence, something stirred within you, it was He knocking at the door of your life. Perhaps it was as you stood beside your boy when he was going off to college or out into the world. Something tugged at your heart. It was His knock. As you awakened Sunday morning with its peace and its sacred memories, and your thoughts went out to the old home of your early training, it was He knocking for entrance. The sermon you heard, the book you read, the music that stirred you and awoke within you the dream of a better life, all came from Him who stands waiting for your welcome. He comes in a thousand different ways, in every act of heroism, in every thought of holiness, in every pure emotion, in every true joy, in every sorrow. The other Sunday morning a man who has not yet

given his heart to Christ said, 'I am going out feeling I ought to be a better man.' That was Christ knocking at the door of his heart. He is never far away. When you come face to face with duty, with human sorrow, with the starry heavens, with love, or joy, or happiness, or perhaps failure, then you hear Him saying, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'

Why does He not enter? He is not a suppliant. He is a king. He is not a beggar. He is a benefactor. He is not in need. He has come to bestow. His is the hand that lifts empires off their hinges. He is not a slave, but a sovereign, and yet He stands as a suppliant before a closed door, and all He can do is to knock. Why does He not lift the latch and walk in? Well, the truth is there is no latch. If you look at Hunt's picture you will see the door cannot be opened from the outside. There is neither latch nor handle by which to open it. The door is barred and bolted on the inside. Only the occupant within can open the door. There is no one who could believe more firmly in the sovereign grace of Almighty God than I do, and yet I know full well that God Himself does not force a man's will. It is this moral sovereignty of man that puts the '*if*' into this phrase. '*If* any man will open the door.' He may open it to the sound of the knocking and welcome the divine visitor, or he may not, but one thing is

sure, the door must be opened from within. The man must will to believe that He who knocks has come to bless, and there is some one there who, if he will, can rise and unbar the door. You feel that as you read this passage there is some one there. You know there is some one listening but not answering. You feel the same thing as you listen to the lines of De La Mare's poem. There is somebody behind the closed door listening in the silence, but not answering:

And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head:—
'Tell them I came, and no one answered,
That I kept my word,' he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

You hear the traveller leaving the house and disappearing in the darkness and all the while you

have a haunting sense that some one saw and heard everything and yet no one came down to open the door and welcome in the traveller, and this is the tragedy of life, that perhaps God has been knocking at your door since childhood and you have listened and gone your way. Sundays come and go, new years come and pass, sacraments and songs, births and deaths, sorrows and joys enter your life. You hear His hand knocking, but you heed Him not. I suppose you think He will stand there forever. I suppose you think He will be there when the time comes for you to let Him in. Pope Pius on Christmas Eve, 1925, stood before the Holy Gate in St. Peter's and knocked three times with a silver hammer, saying, 'Open to me the gates of justice,' and the door that had been sealed for twenty-five years opened and a mighty throng with songs upon their lips passed into the temple, and Christmas Eve ushered in the holy year of the Roman Catholic Church. When the year ended the door was once again sealed for another twenty-five years. Suppose Christ should stand only once in twenty-five years at the door of your life? Perhaps some of you may never have another opportunity. Before twenty-five years go by the door of life for you will be closed, but if that opportunity should come how you would wait for Him! How you would plan for His coming! How you would listen to the sound of His footfall

and yet because you think He still stands waiting on your willingness you tarry.

Rise up, and open the door for Him. You must do it for yourself. Your will is yours to make it His. Come to me and tell me that you have let Him in. Write me a letter and tell me that you have given a welcome to the waiting Christ. I have received many grateful and gracious letters from my hearers and readers, but none will give me more joy than your letter that tells me that you heard the Lord Jesus knocking at your door and you rose up and let Him in.

II

THE SECOND CRUCIFIXION

Richard Le Gallienne

THE attempt to discredit Christianity is not new. It is as old as Christianity itself. When the Gospel was first proclaimed all the advocates of death and darkness came forth. When it was first announced that Jesus had risen from the dead the enemy was on hand with an explanation: 'Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while he slept.' The Epistle to the Hebrews was written less than fifty years after the death of Christ. Yet in that Epistle there is mention made of men who were crucifying Christ afresh and putting Him to an open shame. How can a man crucify to himself afresh the Son of God? How can there be a second crucifixion? The answer is very simple. A man can crucify Christ a second time by turning his back upon Christ. He can do it by refusing to accept Christ as his Lord. He can do it by living as if Jesus had never lived, as if He had never died.

It is being done to-day. Men by the thousands are living as if Christ had never died and rose again

for their salvation. They are living as if death ended all. Some of them are saying that the Gospel is a failure, and that Christianity is bankrupt. We are being told by those who assume to be prophets that Christianity is now thrown into the melting pot to be recast and refashioned again to suit our modern age. We are being told that Christianity must go the way of all religions and that it is impossible to cling to traditions two thousand years old in the light of the developments of modern thought and modern science. In the British Royal Academy, in 1904, Sigismund Goetze's great painting, *Despised and Rejected of Men,* was first exhibited. It is an artist's conception of the second crucifixion. Near St. Paul's Cathedral, from which gleams the golden cross, prophetic of the triumph of Christianity, the painter represents Christ again upon His Cross, wearing the crown of thorns. It is afternoon in London; the crowd passes and surges on, heedless, blind to His presence. Near by is a jockey almost touching the feet of Jesus, engrossed in studying the latest edition of the racing bulletin. Here is a scientist with his test tube, too busy to bestow a look upon the Crucified. The representatives of the life of pleasure are all here: women in evening dress, and gay courtiers. Here is an abandoned woman, and a newsboy exhibiting a newspaper with the latest divorce sensation. In the forefront of the picture is

an ecclesiastic, well-kept, self-satisfied, but oblivious to Christ. They are all here, the representatives of our modern life, even the theologian so busy with his teaching that he misses the spirit of the Cross. Only one person in all the throng lifts her face to the lonely figure of the Christ. She is a nurse on her way to a home of suffering and for a moment she pauses, before passing on her way. It is an appealing picture of Christ neglected, unrecognized, dishonoured, as if again we heard the prophetic words, 'Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow. . . .'

This, too, is the theme of Richard Le Gallienne's verses entitled *The Second Crucifixion.* Some years ago Mr. Le Gallienne, who is an English poet now living in America, was engaged in a theological controversy with Robert Buchanan, a poet and a Scotsman of letters. The subject of the controversy was 'Is Christianity Played Out?' Now, Mr. Le Gallienne is not what one would call a churchman. Indeed, he says some very hard words about churches and organized Christianity in his little book, *The Religion of a Literary Man,* which was the product of this controversy, but, with it all, he has a great and a supreme loyalty for Jesus Christ. Whether or not this poem I am using as an illustration was written for controversial purposes or not, it nevertheless answers perfectly the

question which he was earnestly debating with Robert Buchanan, ' Is Christianity Played Out? '

The first verse reflects the mocking mood of the irreverent crowd that wishes to forget Christ. Christ is dead, says the mocking multitude. He is still upon His Cross.

Loud mockers in the roaring street
Say Christ is crucified again:
Twice pierced His gospel-bearing feet,
Twice broken His great heart in vain.

There is evidence in the life of our modern world that these words express the sentiment of many who would not dare give such bold expression to their thoughts. Lord Birkenhead, speaking before the students of Glasgow University, told the people of Great Britain that idealism is dead and bade them sharpen their swords, for the prizes of life, he says, belong to the nation that has the quickest and the sharpest sword. We are being told that human nature cannot change and that Christianity has failed to solve the problems of life. Racial jealousies and international hatred and class suspicion dominate the thoughts of men, and the gentleness and idealism of Jesus have been nailed to the Cross. There is some truth in this. We are not the Christians we ought to be, and the Spirit of Christ does not dominate and possess the Church as it ought to possess it. Nevertheless the words of Chester-

ton are true: 'Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been tried and found difficult.' The poet listens, however, to the crowd in the roaring street, and quietly replies:

I hear, and to myself I smile,
For Christ talked with me all the while.

This is evidence that cannot be gainsaid. Christ is not dead. He was never more alive than He is today. If you ask where He is now I will tell you. He stands knocking at the door of every social injustice, of every national and international wrong, at the door of every social problem and at the door of every hungry human heart, saying, 'If any man will open the door I will come in.'

In the second verse the mocking multitude turns from the thought of the Cross to the tomb where Jesus was laid. It finds the tomb is not empty. It is a closed tomb. It is sealed. The dead Christ lies there in that silent, sealed tomb.

No angel now to roll the stone
From off His unawaking sleep,
In vain shall Mary watch alone,
In vain the soldiers vigil keep.

Some day perhaps an explorer may come upon that sealed tomb as Lord Carnarvon came upon the tomb of Tut-ankh-amen. What shall we say to this flippant unbelief? There are many things to

say and many arguments to present. It is not easy to dispose of the fact of the Resurrection, and the poet says the very best thing that can be said. He hears men talking of the sealed tomb and the silent Christ and he replies:

Yet while they deem my Lord is dead
My eyes are on His shining head.

It is very difficult to answer that argument and there are millions of people who can rise up and testify that they have experienced and know the presence of the living Christ.

The third stanza turns to the Gospel faith. After His Resurrection the story of the Gospel continues to relate the friendliness and comradeship of Jesus. This, however, we are told is superstition. There is no such thing as a personal, living Christ. All the world has is an absent Christ and a lost Saviour.

Ah! never more shall Mary hear
That voice exceeding sweet and low
Within the garden calling clear:
Her Lord is gone, and she must go.

To this charge the poet reiterates his answer:

Yet all the while my Lord I meet
In every London lane and street.

The facts of experience are as valid as the facts of history and the living Christ as real as the his-

toric Jesus. It is an answer to which there can be no reply. It is final. People who meet with Christ upon the streets of Pittsburgh or of London cannot be shaken in their faith. I have in my hands a letter which I have received from Mr. Le Gallienne. It reads as follows:

'I much appreciate the honouring use you propose making of my verses, *The Second Crucifixion*, and though I do not belong to any organized church, I can sincerely say that I am no less aware of the spirit of Christ walking on the troubled waters of the modern world than when as a boy I met Him "in every London lane and street." Our need of Him is greater than ever, and, in spite of disheartening appearances, I firmly believe that His influence is making itself felt all the time with an ever-increasing power.'

That is an experience beyond the reach of criticism.

The fourth verse looks out upon human need and human suffering. How great it is! How appealing it was in the time of our Lord! In the days of His flesh He went among the poor and the blind and the needy, as a Healer and as the Great Physician. Years afterwards when these days were only a memory the Apostles remembered Jesus as the one who went about doing good. That is a fine tribute, but now we are told there is no Healer, no Physician, no Saviour.

We are in the grip of a mechanistic universe which operates with machine-like precision and with no place for freedom and no room for spiritual values; a world in which natural laws rule from centre to circumference, and the facts of faith by which men live are considered dreams and illusions.

Poor Lazarus shall wait in vain,
And Bartimæus still go blind;
The healing hem shall ne'er again
Be touched by suffering humankind.

Is that true? Does that fit in with the facts of life? Does that answer to the experience of men? This poem says that it does not and that Christ still walks among men:

Yet all the while I see them rest,
The poor and outcast, on His breast.

It is still true that men, women and children rise up and say that the only real satisfaction they know is the comfort and solace which the Gospel of Christ furnishes. My mail is full of the testimony of those who know of the power of the living Christ to heal and to help. Out of his vast loneliness, in the midst of dark paganism, standing alone beside the open grave of his partner in life, John G. Paton said, 'If it had not been for Jesus ——' It is impossible to argue against an experience like that.

The last verse of this short but interesting poem

speaks of the hopelessness which falls upon humanity when men begin to think that the Christ who had brought hope to the hearts of men had left the world; that He who had knocked at the doors of men's hearts bringing in His hands the everlasting mercy knocks no more. His hand is still now and His voice is silent. All these strange and mystic experiences we are told can be explained by psychology, or by psycho-analysis, or by the moving of the subconscious mind.

No more unto the stubborn heart
With gentle knocking shall He plead,
No more the mystic pity start,
For Christ twice dead is dead indeed.

To this again the poet replies with the simple statement:

So in the street I hear men say,
Yet Christ is with me all the day.

This, then, is the repeated and reiterated argument of a Christian man to all the assertions that Christianity has failed and that the Gospel of Christ is discredited. It is the answer, not of logic, of theology, but the answer of experience. A Japanese student of religion has lately said, ' We have been experimenting much, but have not experienced.' Experience, after all, is the test of truth. There may be those who can get comfort and religious

proof from other evidences. They may receive help from what the spade turns up in Bible lands, and receive encouragement from the confirmations of documents rescued from the rubbish-heaps of Egypt and Assyria. They may take comfort from the findings of scholarship and clutch greedily at the crumbs of comfort that fall from the table of the scientist. Well, it is all good, so far as it goes, but all such evidence is worthless compared with the evidence of the heart that knows God, and that can say, 'I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.' No argument can pierce the shield of the man who knows that the Spirit of God bears witness with *his* spirit.

Years ago a book was written by Guy Thorne entitled *When It Was Dark*. It is a story based upon the reputed discovery of the tomb in which Jesus had been buried. In the tomb a tablet was discovered with the inscription, 'I, Joseph of Arimathæa, stole the body of Jesus from the tomb, and hid it.' Gradually the faith of men in the Resurrection failed and darkness fell upon the world. The hope of immortality vanished like the fabric of a dream and in its place hopelessness and despair took up their abode. The hero of the book, however, is a Christian woman who refused to believe the evidence because in her own heart she knew the presence of the living Christ, and through all the darkness she held to the fact of her

own experience. She knew that her Redeemer lived, and at last her faith triumphed when the deception was revealed and the fiction made plain. The heart has its reasons which the intellect cannot understand, and Mr. Le Gallienne himself has said, 'To think less and feel more is the one cure for modern doubt.' I would not have you think less, but I would have you feel more. To be able to stand up before all the world and say with the blind man who had experienced the gracious gift of healing from the hands of Jesus, 'Whether he be a sinner or not I know not. *One thing I know;* whereas I was blind now I see,' that is to present evidence for the reality of the Gospel which cannot be refuted. To stand up before the world and say with the Apostle Paul, 'I know whom I have believed; I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him,' is to silence all controversy and to establish religion on a scientific basis. Religion is experience. This is eternal life, to *know* God. Theology is the explanation, the interpretation of religious experience. A man may be a noted theologian and know nothing about religion. Some of the most unlovely Christians have been men who were able to talk wisely and to discuss learnedly about theology. They need not tremble for the safety of the Ark of God who know Christ in their own hearts and who have experienced the presence of God in their own spirits.

When asked as to what was his greatest discovery, Sir James Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform, replied, 'The greatest discovery that I have ever made is the discovery that Jesus Christ is my Saviour.' Are we able to say to all the doubts and difficulties that are rampant in our complex modern world, 'I know whom I have believed'? Do not miss the personal note. Paul is not saying, 'I know *what* I have believed.' He is asserting the central conviction of his religious life. 'I know *whom* I have believed.' Are we able to say with Job who groped his way through shadows in the twilight of religious faith, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'? Religion is a fact, an experience of the soul, an experience which knows that Christ having died once dieth no more forever.

I cannot put His Presence by, I meet Him everywhere;
I meet Him in the country town, the busy market-square;
The Mansion and the Tenement attest His Presence there.

Upon the funneled ships at sea He sets His shining feet;
The Distant Ends of Empire not in vain His Name repeat,—
And, like the presence of a rose, He makes the whole world sweet!

III

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

Francis Thompson

THE finest poetry in the whole range of literature is in the Bible. One does not need to leave the Bible to enjoy good literature. The choicest imagery is found in the prophets and in the Psalms, and Giovanni Papini has lately been telling us that Jesus is the greatest poet the world has ever known. Where, for example, can you discover poetry like this, in which the writer is speaking of the impossibility of escaping God?

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,
And the light about me shall be night;
Even the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

God is the unescapable. Man is a fugitive, a fugitive from God. It is strange that any one should want to flee from God, but after we have said the last word about man's search for God there is still a word to be spoken concerning God's search for man. The most tragic thing in history is man's search for God. It has ended in failure and defeat. The most triumphant thing in history is God's search after man. It has ended in discovery and redemption. Strange as it may seem, man has always fled from God.

Open your Bible and on almost the first page you will discover a man fleeing from God, hiding from God, among the trees of the garden, and God searching for him, coming in the cool of the day and calling to the fugitive, 'Where art thou?' Turn over a few pages and you will come upon Jacob, and he, too, is fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, out into a far country where God could not follow him, and where he would be alone with his deceit and duplicity. There in the far country he sleeps with a stone for his pillow, and suddenly the angels of God appear, and he awakes to discover that God is there, and the very gate of Heaven opened on his view. A chapter further on we come upon Elijah, and he, too, is a fugitive, out in the wilderness hiding, discouraged, disillusioned, wishing to die. Suddenly the angel of God is at his side, and the question is asked, 'What

doest thou here, Elijah?' Even in the wilderness God had found him. Before the Old Testament closes we come upon the most wonderful of all the stories—so often misinterpreted, so often misunderstood—the story of Jonah, which tells of the fugitive who fled from the presence of God out into the deep, boundless sea, but even there God found him. God discovered him, redeemed him, and set him again in the place of peace.

After all, God is the Great Seeker, and when He appeared in human flesh it was announced that He had come 'to seek and save that which was lost.' Jesus exhausted language in trying to tell the story of the search of God. 'God,' He said, 'is like a shepherd who goes out into the wilderness after the lost sheep. God is like a woman who has lost part of her treasure and searches in the dust and dirt of her mud floor to find that which she had lost. God is like a father whose son is in the far country and whose spirit searches and seeks until there is a return of love, of hope, and of purity.' This is the central fact of our religion. God is the Great Seeker, and in His seeking we find our hope. Like men lost at sea our hope lies in being discovered. Like men imprisoned in the mine our hope is not in the darkness but in the light where helpful hands break through into the prison house. In the words of Pascal, 'We would not now be seeking Him if we had not already been found by Him.'

It was this truth that Francis Thompson illustrated and emphasized in his poem *The Hound of Heaven.* It is a poem of only one hundred eighty-three lines, but it is one of the greatest in English literature. He calls God ' The Hound of Heaven.' It is a bold figure, and is used in the title only. ' God,' he says, ' is the Great Seeker after the souls of men. He is out on the trail of the lost, tracing, tracking the fugitive.' It is the pursuit of love, however, and not of vengeance, and love knows better how to pursue than fear knows how to evade. It is impossible to evade God. When the fleeing soul turns at last it is discovered that God is not to be feared but is the tremendous lover of our souls, and then the fugitive knows that goodness and mercy have pursued him,—that is the word—all his life.

Francis Thompson died at the age of forty-eight, a somewhat broken but happy man. Of him some one, quoting Thomas Gray, has said:

> He gave to mis'ry (all he had) a tear.

The tear was *The Hound of Heaven;*

> He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

The friend was Wilfred Meynell, who, in the providence of God, became his friend and benefactor.

Thompson was brought up in refinement but lived a drifting sort of life. He had indolent habits and was always something of a child. He never put away his toys. He was never able to get up until the day's work was nearly done and was always behindhand. Destined for the priesthood he was dismissed from school for incompetency. Studying medicine for a profession he drifted into a user of drugs. Loved at home he became a wanderer and a homeless vagabond in the city of London. There he drifted into poverty, sleeping on the Thames embankment, selling matches, calling cabs, blacking shoes, living in poverty and in rags. His mind, however, was pure, and his intellect was alert. He submitted a manuscript so soiled and stained that it could scarcely be read and this manuscript came into the hands of Wilfred Meynell, who sent for him, and later sought for months to discover the place of his dwelling. One day Thompson came. The story tells itself: 'The door opened, and a strange hand was thrust in. The door closed, but Thompson had not entered. Again it opened, again it shut. At the third attempt a waif of a man came in. No such figure had been looked for; more ragged and unkempt than the average beggar, with no shirt beneath his coat and bare feet in broken shoes.'

He found in Wilfred Meynell a friend. He found love. He found new life. He became one

of England's greatest poets and in *The Hound of Heaven* we have the autobiography of a twice-born man.

His life had been a flight. What had he been? He had been a fugitive, a fugitive from God as well as from man. It is this thought that dominates the poem. He had looked into his own life and discovered that he had sought satisfaction apart from God, and that he had tried to flee from God's presence. This is what he says:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'

He was unable to find satisfaction in his own thoughts, in the laughter of life or its tears, in its hopes or in its fears. He found no refuge in his

own philosophy. Everything seemed to betray him because of his betrayal of God. He goes on to tell us the path down which he fled. He tempted all God's servitors, he says, and clung to the whistling mane of every wind, but always found himself disdained and betrayed, and ever in his heart he heard the footfall of his unseen Pursuer.

Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet
And a Voice above their beat—
'Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.'

He was kin to little children and sought for satisfaction in the joys and pleasures of innocency, but here, too, peace eluded him. He turned to nature. He sought for satisfaction within nature's wind-walled palace in fellowship with nature's secrets, the smiling face of the sky and the suggestive shadows of the clouds. He laughed in the morning's eyes, and triumphed and saddened with all weather. He discovered, however, that nature and he did not understand each other.

For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound I speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.

After all his seeking and searching he was still flee-

ing from God and God was still following. He was weary and ready to faint, but still he fled, and still—

Nigh and nigh, draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
And past those noisèd Feet
A Voice comes yet more fleet—
'Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me.'

He was unsatisfied, discontented, naked, and alone. From the battlements of the unseen he heard the trumpet of eternity but still he hesitated. 'What has God done,' says Faber, 'that men should not trust Him?' The fugitive knew that he must surrender all, everything, and empty himself of his own will. This he was unwilling to do. He knew full well the name of Him who was pursuing him and what the trumpet was saying, but he was unwilling to yield his life, and still the voice was around him like the bursting sea. Then the miracle happened. He stops, he turns, and at his side he finds God, the tremendous lover of his soul, and the voice which had been ringing in his soul, the voice that had been more instant than the feet, was speaking. It was speaking not in vengeance nor in expectant judgment but in whispering sympathy, for God's patience is never exhausted

and His love never fails. His power is His love and He can do only what love itself can do.

'Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!'

God had discovered His own and the life that had worn itself out fell back into His arms satisfied and at peace:

'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.'

There are two things that must be said in interpretation. The first is that God Himself cannot be satisfied without us. He is our Father. We are His children. He is the Good Shepherd that goes out into the wilderness, seeking the lost. He is the Great Seeker who searches for His lost treasure in the rubbish-heaps of the world. He is the Father who not only waits the return of the prodigal but whose Spirit searches the world for His own. This is why we sing and rejoice in singing, 'O Love that wilt not let me go.' This is why we continue to sing, 'O Joy that seekest me through

pain,' 'O Light that followest all my way,' 'O Cross that liftest up my head.'

The second thing that must be said is that we cannot be satisfied without God. Nothing can content us until we find Him. The heart is restless for it was made for God. Our souls are athirst for God, for the living God. Our hearts are hungry for the bread of life. Our thirsty spirits cry out for the water of which if we drink we shall never thirst. One Sunday Thomas Henry Huxley was staying in a country town. 'I suppose you are going to church,' he said to his friend. 'Yes,' said the friend. 'What if you stayed at home instead and talked to me about your religion?' 'No,' said his friend, 'I am not clever enough to refute your arguments.' Huxley said, 'But what if you told me of your own experience, what religion has done for you?' So the friend stayed and all through the forenoon they talked and Huxley was told the story of what Christ had done for one man's life and at the close of the interview the great scientist said, 'I would give my right hand if I could believe that.' Here was the hunger of the heart, the thirst of the soul, expressing itself. Science, nature, human love, life itself cannot satisfy the heart that is made for God; only God Himself can give rest unto our souls.

IV

CHRIST IN THE UNIVERSE

ALICE MEYNELL

WE live, to-day, not in a world, but in a universe. Our world is but one of the smaller planets that circle round a central sun. Its path around the sun measures about 580,000,000 miles. This central sun which lights our world is some 95,000,000 of miles distant, and though a sun to our world is only one of the stars in our universe, one of some two thousand or three thousand million similar stars or suns. These stars are separated by inconceivable tracts of space. Some thirty of them are within a hundred million miles of us, but most of the distant stars in the Milky Way are at least one hundred thousand trillion miles away. A ray of light travelling 186,000 miles a second takes 50,000 years to travel across what we know as our universe. And beyond our universe there may be other universes that sing and swing in the infinite expanse. Speaking to a skeptical companion in the night, Napoleon swept the starry heavens with his hand and said: 'Who made all these?' Science lifts her head and says,

'I do not know.' Christianity bows reverently and answers, 'Jesus Christ.'

That is a surprising answer. We do not often think of Jesus Christ in terms of the universe. We are too provincial, too sectarian, too nationalistic. To say that Jesus has title to a universal domain challenges our intelligence as well as our imagination. Yet this is the claim the New Testament makes for Him. It proclaims Him Lord of all. It sings, 'Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.' Listen to the simple but profound words of St. John: 'All things were made by him: and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life. He was in the world and the world was made by him.' It is difficult to explain away this extraordinary claim. Hear, too, how St. Paul speaks in a very quiet letter penned in the interest of reality in things spiritual. 'Jesus,' he says, 'is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and in him all things consist.' Did you notice the last word, 'In him all things consist'? The significance of it is this, 'In him all things hold and hang together.' What science in its ignorance calls 'gravitation,'

St. Paul calls 'Christ.' If science has lengthened and broadened and heightened and deepened our world the New Testament has its answer ready and meets this magnified world with its majestic conception of the illimitable, infinite Christ.

It is this conception of Christ which is presented in the verses, *Christ in the Universe*. Alice Meynell was an English woman who spent much of her early life in Italy. Her essays and poetry are suffused with a delicate and spiritual atmosphere which brings refreshment to the soul of every true Christian. The new wonders of the universe were just beginning to break upon the modern world when she wrote of Christ and the place He held not only in her thoughts but in the very life and structure of the world. What Christ has been to our world we know. 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' This is what He means to our world. Does He mean anything to the other worlds within worlds that wheel their way through the infinite space? Are all these stars and suns and worlds merely attendant upon our little planet, or is life to be found there as here, and has God manifested Himself in other worlds that have not been engulfed in the backwash of evil as our world has been? Can it be true that this world of ours is distinguished above all worlds, obscure as it is,

by the thorn-crowned Christ, the Cross and the empty tomb? May it be true that in other and brighter worlds beyond our knowing, He has in some other form revealed Himself? Was He Himself while here among men thinking of something like this when He said, 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd'?

This, you say, is speculation. Concerning such questions we cannot dogmatize, but of this we may be certain: this planet of ours has been trodden by the sacred feet of the Son of God, not Palestine alone, but the ground that we stand on is holy ground. It was into this world He was born. It was our way He took through life, 'strong Son of God, immortal love.' Says Mrs. Meynell:

With this ambiguous earth
His dealings have been told us. These abide:
The signal to a maid, the human birth,
The lesson and the young Man crucified.

What a story it is, this story of 'The young Man crucified.' There are other stories in literature to contrast with it, but none to compare with it. It stands alone. It is a story that has not merely been written, but as Emerson said, 'ploughed into the history of the world.' It began in music, sung by angel choirs, but it never ends. It is the story

of a little child. It is the story of a perfect life. It is the story of a young man crucified. It is the story of One, the Man of Sorrows, the Saviour who opened His arms, and invited all men to find rest in Him. He is not of the east nor of the west. He is human and in Him east and west meet. On first hearing of the story of Jesus an educated Brahman said: 'Thou, O Christ, art the only Buddha.'

And it all took place upon this planet of ours. It is the most incredible, inconceivable, impossible story, this story that God was in Christ, living, serving, dying, saving this world of ours, and

Not a star of all
The innumerable host of stars has heard
How He administered this terrestrial ball.
Our race have kept their Lord's entrusted Word.

Of His earth-visiting feet
None knows the secret—cherished, perilous;
The terrible, shamefast, frightened, whispered, sweet,
Heart-shattering secret of His way with us.

If, for example, England claims Shakespeare and rejoices over him as against the world; if Germany claims Goethe; Italy, Dante; France, Victor Hugo; Scotland, Sir Walter Scott, and America, Nathaniel Hawthorne, this planet of ours claims as against all rival claims of other suns and stars and planets the Gospel story of how God for us, and

for our salvation became man. When the planets and suns of all the universe shall come to judgment this shall be our boast. There may be other worlds which can boast of richer and riper civilizations, of far-flung harvest fields or mountains that soar higher than Everest, of rivers deeper and larger than the Amazon and the Mississippi; in natural scenery and the richness of waterfalls, forests and sunsets we may be outclassed, but we shall boast still that ours is holy ground, for here the Son of God was born and lived and died.

No planet knows that this
Our wayside planet, carrying land and wave,
Love and life multiplies, and pain and bliss,
Bears as chief treasure one forsaken grave.

This forsaken, empty grave is earth's most treasured treasure.

And yet it may be He has revealed Himself to other worlds in other forms. There may be other Gospels for other worlds than ours. It is not likely that He who made all things beautiful in their time would leave His creation to itself. He must be 'the center and soul of every sphere.' Wherever there is life, it must find its source in Him. Science to-day is speaking of what it calls the insurgence and the abundance of life. More and more we are coming to see that we are living in a living universe. Life presses up into being

through all barriers and fills every corner, crevice, and cranny. We find life among the snow-capped summits of Monte Rosa, ten thousand feet up, and we find it creeping and crawling in the dark, and silent depths of the sea. 'It is hard to say what difficulties living creatures may not conquer or circumvent. You may find insects in hot springs in which you cannot keep your hand immersed, or rotifers and other small fry under fifteen feet of ice in the little lakes of Antarctica; you find a brine-shrimp and two or three other animals in the Great Salt Lake; you find a fish climbing a tree, and thoroughly terrestrial types like spiders having species living under water; there is, as Sir Arthur Shipley has shown, a bustle of life on the dry twigs of the heather. When we consider the filling of every niche, the finding of homes in extraordinary places, the mastery of difficult conditions, the plasticity that adjusts to out-of-the-way exigences, the circumvention of space (as in migration), and the conquest of time (as in hibernation), we begin to get an impression of the insurgence of life. We see life persistent and intrusive—spreading everywhere, insinuating itself, adapting itself, resisting everything, defying everything, surviving everything!' What this life is science cannot tell. The New Testament tells us it has its source in Christ: 'In him was life.' 'He came to give life and to give it abundantly.' We must let the New Testa-

ment speak for itself. A recent writer has told us that since the universe has grown great we must dream for it a greater God. That is not necessary. We have in the New Testament a God great enough for all imaginable universes.

Nor, in our little day,
May His devices with the heavens be guessed;
His pilgrimage to thread the Milky Way,
Or His bestowals there, be manifest.

But in the eternities
Doubtless we shall compare together, hear
A million alien gospels, in what guise
He trod the Pleiades, the Lyre, the Bear.

You say this is fancy. Perhaps it is, but it all leads us back to the fact our world knows—the fact of Christ. What we have seen of discovery and enlightenment concerning earth and sea and air gives us reason to be alert as to what the future may bring forth. The radio has annihilated space and time. There are new disclosures, new surprises, new revelations awaiting us and our children. Lord Balfour has wisely said, 'We know too much about matter to be materialists.' Science is talking to-day in terms of spiritual reality. We are in touch with life, abundant life, with life that like a tide beats upon the shores of nameless worlds. The universe is one and the infinitesmal and invisible atom with its revolving electrons is

the same in substance and in glory with the most distant sun. The same life flows through all things. This is why Mrs. Meynell brings her noble verses to a close with the prophetic words:

Oh, be prepared, my soul,
To read the inconceivable, to scan
The infinite forms of God those stars unroll
When, in our turn, we show to them a Man.

This, then, will be our boast when in the eternities all the prizes and treasures of all the worlds shall be compared.

And this is the tragedy of it all, that Christ has been all this to our poor wayward world, and done all this in His life and death for us, and we may go our way, careless of the fact that we are heirs of this priceless, this immeasurable inheritance. Mr. Norman Lockyer has a story of an old abbé whom he met while on a scientific mission in the Rocky Mountains. The abbé explained that some months ago he had been ill and had dreamed he had died and gone to heaven. There the angels and the redeemed crowding round him asked him of the earth from which he had come. Had he seen this and had he been there, and resident of the world as he had been, he had to confess that he had not seen the glories of his own world. Some day you and I will stand in the eternities, and the wonder and glory and mystery of Christ's redeem-

ing love will be the everlasting theme. It will be the song in every heart. And we will be pressed to tell what we know of Him who in lowliness and love became the heavenly visitant to our earthly home. Will we be able to say, ' Yes, I knew Him. He is my Friend, my Saviour, my Lord. To me He is the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely.' Will we be able to say that? Will we be prepared to tell the story of His triumphant march down through the centuries and how He rode to His coronation into the very citadel where evil was enthroned? Will we be able to testify to the truth by which men have been set free? Then we will be able to join in the coronation song and crown Him Lord of all.

V

THE HOUSE OF CHRISTMAS

GILBERT K. CHESTERTON

THE most dramatic story in the Bible is that which tells how Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem and found no room in the inn. It is a story that has captivated the heart and thrilled the imagination of each generation of Christians. It is intensely dramatic and yet the story is told in a style so simple and in words so matter of fact that it seems to partake of the commonplace. The Passover throng, the crowded village, the overcrowded inn, the weary travellers, the urgency of their need, the refrain of 'No room,' 'No room,' the welcome of the crazy stable close at hand and the cry of a little child lying in a manger, is a familiar story to all of us and its familiarity sometimes blinds us to the marvel of it all.

Think who He was! Think what had happened! Think how the world had waited for His coming. Think how we look back and adore and then read the words, 'There was no room for them in the inn.' When George V. was crowned king, his eldest son went to the old Welsh castle of Carnarvon to be received as Prince of Wales. Ac-

companied by David Lloyd George, greatest of living Welshmen, he approached the castle door. All within was still. The door was closed and barred. He knocked, but there was no answer. He knocked again, but there was no response. He knocked the third time and the bar was drawn, the door was flung wide, and, as he entered, the castle was glorious with light and the hall vocal with song. The Prince had come unto his own, and his own received him with a singing welcome. It was not so with the Prince of Peace. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. To dream such a thing is absurd. It is too wonderful, too strange, too humanly impossible, not to be true. It is incredible, but it is history. It belongs to faith, but it is fact. There was no room for Him.

It is this anti-climax, this historic paradox which Chesterton, with his well-known love of paradox, celebrates in *The House of Christmas.*

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

The House of Christmas, you see, is the very climax of paradoxes. Where Mary and Joseph and the Christ-Child were homeless you and I are at home. 'There was no room for them in the inn,' but there is room in the Gospel of Christ for all the weary and homeless sons of toil. There in the crazy, shaking stable something was disclosed which was stronger and more enduring than the square stones of the Eternal City. The human heart finds its true home in the Gospel supplied by the Christmas miracle. The homeless Christ calls all the children of men to find their home in Him. He explains, He interprets, He satisfies, He gives rest unto their souls. He warms our hearts by His presence. He walked with two disciples one Sunday afternon. They were sad and dispirited. The bottom had dropped out of their hopes and all they could see was the gathering darkness of fading faith. Suddenly Jesus came. At first they did not know Him and in a little while He was gone, and then, looking into each other's faces, they said, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked with us?' That was the miracle. Their cold hearts were warmed and comforted and their faces were illumined as with the dawn. That is what Christ does. He warms our hearts. When Phillips Brooks told Helen Keller about the revelation of God in Christ Jesus she said, 'I know Him although I have never known His name. I have felt

His presence. It is like the warmth.' In Christ Jesus we are satisfied and our hearts are at home.

This is the Christmas message: the Gospel of Christ satisfies. It is impossible for houses and lands and things to satisfy the heart that dreams dreams and sees visions and lives not by bread alone, but by imagination and aspiration and the enjoyment of spiritual beauty.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honour and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the Yule tale was begun.

We cannot live without the sense of the miraculous, the wonder of life, the alluring hope of the invisible. This is why Christmas is welcomed by young and old. It gives freedom to our spirits. We cease to be materialists. We live under miraculous skies. We begin to believe again that: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. We cannot attain our best unless we look up and the miraculous star in the sky is God's gift to man. One of the sayings attributed to Christ which scholars have discovered

goes on to say: Jesus saith, Let not him who seeketh cease from seeking until he has found; and when he has found he shall be amazed; and when he hath been amazed he shall reign; and when he hath reigned he hath rest.

This is the Christmas message: the Gospel of Christ satisfies. He satisfies not only our imaginations but our minds. He answers the questions which the intellect raises. He alone can sit in the night when the light is gone out of the sky and answer the soul's question, 'How can these things be?' In the days when he fought religious doubt and triumphed Horace Bushnell, thrusting his hands through his black, bushy hair, cried out desperately, yet triumphantly, 'O men! what shall I do with these arrant doubts I have been nursing for years? When the preacher touches the Trinity and when logic shatters it all to pieces, I am all at the four winds. But I am glad I have a heart as well as a head. My heart wants the Father; my heart wants the Son; my heart wants the Holy Ghost—and one just as much as the other.'

The Christian faith satisfies. It offers a resting place for our minds and there are many who, if they are to find rest unto their souls, must first of all discover intellectual rest. The heart cannot be at peace if the intellect is sailing the sea of doubt. It is our claim that Christianity is light for the mind as well as peace for the heart.

A child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam,
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost—how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the sky's dome.

One of the greatest intellects the Church has ever known was Augustine, who formed and fashioned the theology of the Church for centuries. He was a born philosopher. He read deeply into the philosophies of his age, and at last said, 'In Cicero and Plato and other such authors I find many an acute saying, many a word that kindles the emotion, but in none do I find the words, Come unto me and I will give you rest.'

This is the Christmas message: the Gospel of Christ satisfies; and it is the recurring refrain of Chesterton's verses.

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

There never was a truer word than this: 'Our peace is put in impossible things.' It is said of a great musician who, while visiting this country, was taken by his host to church. When the next Sunday came around the invitation was renewed but the musician declined. 'No,' he said, 'I will not go with you unless you can take me to hear some one who will tempt me to do the impossible.' He was right. A religion that is on the level of man's possibility is not worth bothering about. Our peace is found not in commonplace things, but in the impossible things where clash and thunder unthinkable wings around an incredible star. Christmas gives us the pledge that nothing is impossible with God.

This is the Christmas message: the Gospel of Christ satisfies. The House of Christmas is the true home of our hearts. There is no room for us in any of the inns of the world. On the tomb of Dean Stanley are engraven the words, 'The inn of a traveller on his way to the New Jerusalem.' The heart's true home is not found in any place or on any chart. As rivers run to the ocean and as fire ascends to meet the sun so do our souls, that come from God, press forward to rest in Him who is our home.

Year by year at the Christmas season, men, women and children, rich and poor, young and old, increasingly find satisfaction in the music and the

message of the Gospel. The very air is vocal with His praise and His name is on every tongue. It is the miracle of history.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall all men come,
To an older place than the Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and that are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.

Sooner or later we must come to the end of the way of the wandering star. Sooner or later we all discover the reality of the things that cannot be and are. Life without immortality cannot be content. In his old age Victor Hugo said:

Winter is on my head and eternal spring is in my heart. The nearer I approach the end the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the worlds which invite me. It is marvellous, yet simple. It is a fairy tale and yet it is history. For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose, verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, song; I have tried all. But I feel that I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me.

Life without immortality cannot be content and immortality without Christ is empty. This is eternal life—to know God and Jesus Christ whom

He has sent. He is the home of our hearts, the refuge of our souls. One of the most appealing letters in all literature is a letter written by David Gray, a young Scottish poet. Educated for the ministry, he chose the life of a literary man but lost his health in poverty and loneliness in London, and died at the age of twenty-three. In his loneliness he wrote:

I am coming home—homesick. I cannot stay from home any longer. What's the good of me being so far from home and sick and ill? O God! I wish I were home never to leave it more! Tell everybody that I am coming back—no better: worse, worse. What's about climate, about frost or snow or cold weather, when one's at home? I wish I had never left it. . . . I have no money, and I want to get home, home, home.

That is the cry of every soul. Let us arise and go to our Father, our heart's true home.

VI

I HAVE A RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH

ALAN SEEGER

THERE is no other thing more worth thinking about than faithfulness. Call it what you will, loyalty, faithfulness, truth, honesty, honour, sincerity, there is nothing higher or nobler than the quality of life these words proclaim. Faithfulness is fundamental. All the virtues of life and all the fine words that speak of love, faith, hope, gentleness, joy and peace are but beads strung on the string of a faithful life. Think what happens when this great quality fails. We have deception, hypocrisy, falsehood, deceit, fraud. We have a house built upon the sand, which the storms of life undermine and sweep away. When the prophet looked across the years to the coming of the Christ he declared that one would come the girdle of whose loins would be faithfulness. In my mail the other week, among the many letters from our radio friends, there is a letter from Iowa which says:

I have been confined to my bed for three months. I suffer so much pain that I sleep very little, and

I pray to the Lord that if it be His will He would take me home. I have consecrated my life and all I have to Him.

There you have the heroic note. It is required of a man not that he be strong and healthy, or that he be wise or wealthy, but that he be faithful, and he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.

This was the theme which Alan Seeger set to the music of beautiful words. He was a young American who, when the war broke out, felt the urge of duty so strong that he could not wait for America's delayed entrance into the struggle, but crossed the sea and enlisted in the Foreign Legion of the French Army.

Alan Seeger gave himself unreservedly to the great cause and fell with his face to the foe beside the Marne. It was while waiting to go into action that he wrote the words that must now be familiar to all who love the music of beautiful words:

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade;
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple blossoms fill the air—
I have a rendezvous with Death—
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

In the loveliness of the words we have both beauty and the beast, we have youth and life, love

and spring, but we have also war and hate, death and defeat; yet the theme is victory and the cause triumphant.

It is necessary, of course, that the cause to which one has plighted his faith should be one of high worth. There was no shadow of suspicion upon the spirit of this young American as to the cause which challenged his conscience. In these days, when the Great War is spoken about as civilization's most colossal blunder, it is well for us, perhaps, to recall the spiritual passions that surged in the souls of those who made the supreme sacrifice that civilization might be saved for us who remain to criticize. It was not victory or adventure that lured this gallant soldier on. It was the righteousness of the cause for which he fought. Writing to his mother he said:

> The matter of being on the winning side has never weighed with me in comparison with that of being on the side where my sympathies lie. . . . There should really be no neutrals in a conflict like this, where there is not a people whose interests are not involved.

From the trenches he wrote:

> You must not be anxious about my not coming back. The chances are about ten to one that I will. But if I should not, you must be proud, like a Spartan mother, and feel that it is your contribu-

tion to the triumph of the cause whose righteousness you feel so keenly. Everybody should take part in this struggle which is to have so decisive an effect, not only on the nations engaged but on all humanity. There should be no neutrals but every one should bear some part of the burden.

It was to this high ideal that he consecrated himself and for which he gave the last full measure of his devotion.

Let us look, then, at the principle which underlies this true life. Fidelity, not freedom from danger or death, is life's great compelling motive. 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' There is an increasing danger in this age of soft living that we get to look upon life as the greatest of all prizes and upon death as the greatest of all disasters. This young man loved life. He was only twenty-eight when he kept his rendezvous with death. He loved beauty. He longed for the springtime. He loved to see the flowers bloom. He was in love with beauty, with life itself. In these verses he says:

It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land,
And close my eyes and quench my breath—
It may be that I shall pass him still.
I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

There is something, however, worse than death, worse than suffering, worse than failure. Sometimes it is better to die than to live. The great company of soldier dead thought so; the great army of martyrs thought so. In the Book of The Revelation there is a letter addressed to the Church at Smyrna. The Bishop of that church was Polycarp. He was a disciple of St. John, and there is in existence a letter which tells the story of his life and his fine death. Charged with being a Christian he was threatened with death unless he would recant. Undaunted he stood before his persecutors and challenged them to do their worst, saying, 'Eighty and six years have I served my Lord, and He has done me no wrong. How, then, can I blaspheme my Lord who saved me?' and there in the amphitheatre on Sunday, a spectacle to the great surging multitude, his spirit went up with the flames to God, and life and immortality crowned his sacrifice. There is something worse than death. No form of anæmia is more weakening than to say that there is nothing worth fighting for, nothing worth dying for. The world has always stood aside and will always stand aside for the men who have convictions and who are willing to go through hell for them. Men do not march to death for theories. They do not become martyrs for opinions. They do not suffer the loss of all things for a philosophy or some form of new

thought. It is conviction that counts, and the world will always make way for the man who suffers for truth's sake.

It was under deep conviction that Paul said: 'I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.' It was under a deep conviction that Esther said, 'I go . . . and if I perish, I perish.' It was under a deep conviction that the three exiles in Babylon said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' We remember how Jesus went up to Jerusalem with His face set, knowing what things would befall Him there, and knowing that He laid down His life voluntarily. 'I have power to lay it down,' He said, 'and I have power to take it again.' It was under deep conviction that saints and martyrs fought the good fight, finished their course, kept the faith and won their crown.

If there is something worse than death there is also something better in life than comfort. Alan

Seeger entered the War early. His first entry in his war diary is September 27, 1914; the last is dated June 28, 1916. He had nearly two full years of war. He knew the courage that was necessary to face fatigue, discomfort and misery.

God knows 'twere better to be deep
Pillowed on silk and scented down,
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear . . .

Yet no word of complaint was uttered. Writing to his mother after he had been reported as killed or missing, he said:

I can only say that I am perfectly content here and happier than I possibly could be anywhere else. I was a spectator, now I am an actor.

This is the true secret and the true principle of life. In a recent book devoted to the study of the character of Jesus the author labours to make out a case for the joyousness of the life of Christ. He argues and argues well that joy, not sorrow, is the dominant note in the life of our Lord. Nevertheless he is wrong. Neither joy nor sorrow motived Jesus in His conduct or in His character. Joy and sorrow were but incidents in His path of duty. He Himself declared that He came to do the will of God, and if the doing of that will brought joy or

sorrow, it mattered not, faithfulness was everything to Him. 'My meat,' He said, 'is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.' It is to this high honour we are called. We, too, have a tryst to keep. We, too, have a rendezvous at some disputed barricade. The battlefield with its scarred slopes and lurid skylines is only a memory, but there is still fighting all along life's frontier. The battlefield is where we find ourselves this very minute. The enemy is at our gates. If we listen we will hear the knocking. The attack is made upon the loyalties by which we live.

There is the loyalty you owe yourself. You have a rendezvous with yourself, for the 'first great work and task, performed by few, is that yourself may to yourself be true.' The first question a man should ask himself every day of the year is 'Am I on good terms with myself?' We are told that the mirror is the sacred symbol of Shinto. That is significant. The mirror reflects one's appearance, one's personality, one's soul, and it is a fine thing to be able to look into the mirror and say, 'Here stands a man who has kept faith with himself,' for there is a certain sense in which the judgment seat of God is in a man's own soul.

I sent my Soul into the Invisible
Some letter of that after-life to spell,
And by and by my Soul returned to me
And answered, 'I Myself am Heaven and Hell.'

There is the loyalty you owe your own home and your own loved ones. I am speaking to not a few who know that things are not well behind the closed doors of their own home, and where there is a suggestion of disloyalty the flames shoot up as from hell itself. These are days when men and women and young people hold loosely to the stern domestic virtues of fidelity and loyalty upon which alone a home is surely and safely founded. You remember the story of Penelope. It is the finest story of loyalty I know. Ulysses, her soldier husband, had gone to the war and was given up as lost. Lovers came to seek her hand and she promised to marry when the web at which she was weaving was finished. You remember that it was never finished. What was done in the day was unravelled at night and in that faith and loyalty she triumphed. In the truest sense she kept the faith, and what seemed to others as failure was to her victory. Surely, whatever obligation you have there is a rendezvous with those with whom you have plighted your troth, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death you do part. Can you look into the face of your wife, your husband, your father, your mother, and say, 'I to my pledged word am true'?

There is the loyalty you owe to God. Some of you years ago gave Him your plighted word, but all you have now to give is your forgotten vows,

your broken promises. Some have been shirkers who have never acknowledged the obligation nor faced the flaming fact that sooner or later every broken vow and every disloyal act comes home to judgment and disputes life's further advance. You cannot avoid that rendezvous with Death, and for my part it has only a passing interest, as it had to Alan Seeger, who, writing to his mother, said, 'Death is nothing terrible after all.' If I were a poet I would like to change one word and say, 'I have a rendezvous'—not with death, and not with life, as some one has written—'with Christ.' 'I have a rendezvous with Christ at some disputed barricade,' for in Him life is interpreted and death transformed. Will you keep a rendezvous with Him? I do not ask for loyalty to any argument, to any doctrinal interpretation, to any side of any religious controversy. I claim your loyalty to Him. If you have lost your way among the theological discussions of our modern world I am challenging you to loyalty to Him and to Him alone. If you can come only as a doubter, come, and like Thomas make the great discovery of faith. If you can come only as a penitent sinner, come, and like Peter, have your tears and your fears kissed away. If you can come only as a mourner, come, and like Mary Magdalene experience the presence of a living Redeemer. If you can come to Him only over the old, well-beaten path of old-fashioned faith, come. If you can come only as a modernist with

your microscope in your hand, come, and He will open your eyes to a beauty that no microscope can discover.

For twenty years I have spent a few weeks of each summer in a little haven of rest on the Canadian side of Lake Erie. When we first started to go there the only way we could travel was by a dray horse over a rough and uncertain road, but the horse and cart brought us at last to the little haven of rest by the lake shore. Later a boat was built for traffic upon the river, and we could journey there for a price, a distance of some five miles. Sometimes the wind was contrary and the flat-bottomed boat was difficult to guide, but it brought us at last to the little haven of rest by the lake shore, and now in these modern days we can drive in a motor-car over a perfect road, and we come at last to the same little haven of rest with its glory and its dreams. The way we come has little to do with the joy and peace of that quiet place. Well, Christ, our Lord, is our haven of rest, and it matters little how we come to Him as long as we come. We may come to Him with tears in our eyes, like the penitent and the prodigal, or we may come with laughter in our hearts like little children. Only let us come, and keep saying in our hearts:

> But I've a rendezvous with CHRIST,
> . . . . . .
> And I to my pledged word am true,
> I shall not fail that rendezvous.

VII

RECESSIONAL[1]

Rudyard Kipling

THE easiest thing in the world is to forget. We could almost assent to the child's definition that memory is the thing we forget with. The easiest of all excuses is to say, 'I forgot.' And yet it is one of the tragedies of life. There are, for example, old folks at home who have been forgotten by children who have achieved success in the world. Christmas and New Year, perhaps, remind them of their obligations, but the days of the week and the weeks of the month, and the months of the year go by, and the old folks, if not altogether forgotten, are ofttimes neglected. There is no more frequent theme in Scripture than the ease with which men forget God. Again and again God complains that He has been forgotten. It sounds as a lament on the lips of the prophets. Isaiah pleads with the people of Israel: 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel

[1] *Recessional,* Copyright, 1903, by Rudyard Kipling.

doth not know, my people doth not consider.' Listen to the wail of Jeremiah: 'Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.' We could easily imagine God doing without us, but for men to do without Him, to forget Him, passes belief, and yet if we read history and if we know our Bible the commonest thing in the world is for men and nations to forget God.

This was the sermon which Rudyard Kipling preached when he wrote the words of *Recessional.* The words are familiar and have become one of the hymns of the Church. When we talk about great preachers we forget the poets. If you wish to read the greatest sermon on family religion you must read Burns' *The Cotter's Saturday Night.* If you would read the greatest evangelistic sermon ever preached on conversion you must read John Masefield's *The Everlasting Mercy.* If you would read the finest discourse on immortality you must acquaint yourself with Tennyson's *In Memoriam.* The greatest of all Christmas messages is found, not in volumes of sermons, but in Milton's *Ode to the Nativity.* The greatest homily that was ever delivered on an outraged conscience was not delivered by Augustine or Wesley or by any bishop,

but by William Shakespeare in *Macbeth,* and the greatest of all sermons on patriotism, national loyalty, integrity, and justice is to be found not in the orations of Daniel Webster or Henry Ward Beecher, but in these lines of Rudyard Kipling, the English poet. It is written in Biblical language: ' Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God.' There are five verses in the poem and in each there is an exquisite phrase which proclaims a great moral truth.

The first verse proclaims the central theme that God is the great Determiner of destiny.

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The verses were written in 1897, the Diamond Jubilee year of the reign of Queen Victoria. There

is a tradition to the effect that Kipling had written words which had about them the atmosphere of battle and the challenge of war, but a truer inspiration possessed him and he gave forth these simple verses which have since sung themselves into the heart of the English-speaking world. The British Empire had made tremendous progress during the reign of the great English queen, and that progress has since continued. In the Exposition held a short while ago at Wembley there was a great electrically illuminated map in one of the government buildings. As you stood looking at it, suddenly the sign showed ' The British Empire Three Hundred Years Ago,' and it showed a few lighted spots scattered over the world. Then the sign changed and the words ' To-day ' flashed upon the sign and it seemed as if there was a flash of light in every corner of the earth. The British Empire has been a greatly favoured one, and in celebrating her wide domain of empire the poet called attention not to battleships or far-flung flags, but to righteousness, and truth and God through whom the empire had achieved and maintained its greatness. A nation's assets are not its material resources only, but its manhood.

The lesson which Kipling enunciated for Britain is needed not less by America. For, to-day, America stands among the nations a favoured people. Three hundred years ago she was nowhere. To-

day she is everywhere. Her far-flung flag is upon the high seas and in the capitals of the world. We like to think that God has raised her up for a supreme and gracious purpose, and that like Israel she is God's messenger to the peoples of the world. Used rightly the consciousness of having a divine mission in the world may be of great service, but it is a very dangerous doctrine to proclaim. History is full of examples of nations that have gone down to overthrow and ruin because they believed and acted on the belief that God had chosen and ordained them for some great mission in the world. The captain of the Assyrian hosts proclaimed that doctrine before the besieged people shut in behind the walls of Jerusalem, yet it was Assyria, and not Israel, that went down in crushing and ignominious defeat. It was the same doctrine which finally brought disaster and overthrow upon Israel herself. Was she not chosen of God as the messenger of the Eternal among men? And yet God swept her from the page of history. In our own day we have heard that doctrine proclaimed by Germany. It was dressed up in religious robes and the German army went forth singing, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. The 'good old German God' was appealed to and yet Germany was not saved from overthrow. In the early days of our republic, towards the end of his great life, Benjamin Franklin, at the age of eighty years, gave voice to this warning:

I have lived a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of His truth, That God Governs the Affairs of Men.

And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it possible that an empire can rise without His notice?

We have been assured in the sacred writings that except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.

The second verse follows through with the thought that true success is not found in militarism, but in righteousness, and that the secret of permanency is the same for nations as for individuals. The secret of power is not the exertion or expression of individual or national will, but the surrender of the will to God that He may work in us and through us. It is impossible for God to use a man or a nation that can get along without Him. If David is going to fight and conquer the blasphemous and outrageous giant he cannot do it in the armour of Saul. He must go in the simplicity of his shepherd's coat and his sling and in the tremendous power of a living faith, and if God is going to use a nation He must use one that is humble and teachable and sacrificial. One could almost think of God, as He looks upon our legislative mills grinding out law after law and regulation after

regulation and battleship after battleship, saying as David said concerning Saul's armour and arms —' I cannot use them.'

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The Captains and the Kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The finest thing in a nation's life, as in the life of an individual, is when that nation, humble and sacrificial, becomes an instrument in the hands of Almighty God. There have been times in the lives of every great nation when this has been so. The supreme moment in the life of Israel was when Israel, like a little child, in the moment of her greatest national crisis waited upon God, the king upon his knees, the people waiting breathlessly for the divine commission. The greatest periods in American history have not been those moments when the jingo spirit and the jazz spirit dominated the thought of the people, but when with humble and contrite heart the nation waited upon God as in the days of Lincoln, or in the days of the Great War, and knew that only His hand could save.

It would seem sometimes as we read the history of our race that it is just the ebb and flow of a tidal movement, the rise and fall of nations, the

coming and going of civilizations, and that all the pomp of yesterday becomes the rubbish heap of to-day. Our explorers are digging below the surface of the present and finding buried far beneath the gilded temples of a bygone age. We excavate among the tombs of the kings for the treasures of Egypt, and the great civilizations of Greece and Rome lie in ruins recovered only by the archæologist and the explorer, and all their armies and navies have never been able to stem the advance of desolation.

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Sometimes we talk as if all that is necessary is to give our civilization to the world. We ought to know better. It will do the world no good to be westernized or Americanized, if it is not Christianized. The Word of God does not read, 'There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, except the name of civilization or culture or Americanization.' The name that redeems and saves us is a divine name, the only name, the name of Him Who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The warning which Kipling proclaims is the same as that proclaimed in the words, 'Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God.' Nations in their poverty and in their feebleness have been loyal, but nations that have grown great and prosperous and wealthy have forgotten God, and the destruction that wasteth at noonday is upon them. The wine of prosperity has gone to their heads.

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

In their poverty they remembered. In their wealth and prosperity they forgot. When a nation is young and emerging out of the shadows of obscurity it is beset with dangers and temptations that come from weakness and timidity, but the real dangers that come to a nation come when it has

found for itself a place in the sun and has uncovered its strength. It was not when Rome was small and struggling that she stumbled, but when in her greatness she became arrogant and dared to make slaves her servants that she lost the power of self-mastery. There was a day when Spain had her treasure ships upon the high seas but in her greatness irreverence and greed overthrew her. There was a day when Germany was great, great in literature, in music, in religion, in moral leadership, and then she sought her place in the sun, and, drunk with the sight of power, she loosed her legions upon the world. America to-day stands in the place of her greatest crisis, for greatness and wealth and prosperity are in danger of clouding her moral vision. And what is true of a nation is true also of the Church. Jesus was not afraid of small, poor churches. He was afraid of great, rich churches. He left no warning message for the poor, small church. It is the small, poor church that furnishes our theological seminaries and mans our missionary fields. Jesus was not afraid of weakness and poverty. He was afraid of the noonday splendour, of the wasting destruction of success. It was at the closed door of a rich church that He stood waiting for entrance and saying, ' Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' and His last message to that church was, ' Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need

of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyes alive that thou mayest see.'

In analyzing the character and public messages of Grover Cleveland and in trying to make an estimate of the background of his great life, his biographer says, 'He frankly spoke old truths and pledged his honour to them.' I think that same tribute might be paid to President Coolidge. It is given to him not to expound novelties but to speak old truths and to pledge his honour to them. And this is the poet's theme:

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!

Without religion there can be no enduring prosperity in life, in the social order or in the nation. It is a tried saying but it needs to be twice repeated that except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it. After a superficial sceptic had spoken slightingly of religion and its place in

the life of the nation our own poet, James Russell Lowell, in memorable words oft repeated said:

When the keen scrutiny of sceptics has found a place on this planet where a decent man may live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children unspoiled and unpolluted, a place where age is reverenced, infancy protected, womanhood honoured, and human life held in due regard,—when sceptics can find such a place ten miles square on this globe, where the Gospel of Christ has not gone before and cleared the way and laid the foundations that made decency and security possible, it will then be in order for these sceptical literati to move thither and there ventilate their views. But so long as these men are dependent on the very religion which they discard for every privilege they enjoy, they may well hesitate to rob the Christian of his hope and humanity of its faith in that Saviour who alone has given to men that hope of eternal life which makes life tolerable and society possible, and robs death of its terrors and the grave of its gloom.

The question raises itself in the minds of all of us, 'What can we do?' 'What can I do?' to the end that God may not be forgotten in the circle in which I move, in the home in which I live, and in the nation of which I am proud. Well, you can do the same thing that you do when any great question demanding decision is raised. You can vote. You can cast your vote and your influence

for God. You can cast your vote for the recognition of God in your home. You can cast your vote for obedience to the law of God in the nation. You can cast it for the Christian Sunday and for the Christian Church, and for that system of education in our schools and colleges that recognizes God and gives supremacy to the spirit of Christ. You can cast it for a simpler social order purified of the weakness which menaces the life of our people to-day. If you love your nation and if you love your own soul you will cast your vote every time the opportunity presents itself. You will strive to do what William Blake, another Christian English poet, said he would do in the face of all the worldly influences around him:

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear: O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

VIII

GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH ENTERS INTO HEAVEN

VACHEL LINDSAY

THERE is nothing in the Bible or out of it equal to the sublime beauty and majesty of a passage found in the Book of The Revelation which runs as follows: ' These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Whatever we may say about ancient and modern poetry there is nothing in any literature that can stand beside this. Tennyson, who knew the music of words, said that it surpassed in grandeur any writing he knew. No wonder Robert Burns, who, himself, has put words into immortal verse, confessed he could never read these verses without tears. George Matheson, the blind preacher and poet, has called the passage a great concert-hall full of singers, vocal with praise, the song of redemption being sung by a multitude which no man can number, and this is the song they sing, ' Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.'

The passage is not only a great concert-hall; it is a great gallery full of both music and pictures. It contains the greatest of all our pictures of redemption. Some of us have seen Michelangelo's painting of *The Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. What a marvellous and magnificent scene it is. The Judge is on His throne and before Him are gathered all nations, and justice is the word of the hour. Here, however, we have a magnificent picture of redemption. We see again the throne of God in the midst, and around it is gathered an innumerable multitude, but the word of the hour is not justice but mercy, and from every heart the cry goes up, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.'

Truly it is a great picture and redemption is its theme. Look at it a little in detail. We see a great company of the redeemed. 'These are they which came out of the great tribulation.' They have been through the mill of affliction. They have been beaten as by a threshing instrument and have come through in triumph. They are in white. 'They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ from every sin they wear the white garment of victory. It is a picture also of the redeemed life. They stand in the presence of the eternal God and at His right hand they discover pleasures forever more. There is no idleness here.

They 'serve him day and night in his temple.' No loneliness and no strangeness here. 'He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.' There is no hunger of the heart. 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.' There is no withering of hope nor wearying of life. 'Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.' Best of all it is a picture of the Redeemer Himself, for we behold Him as the Saviour and Shepherd who leads unto fountains of the waters of life, and sorrow and sighing like birds of the night fold their wings and fly away. What a picture of redemption it is!

It was William Cowper who sang, 'Redeeming love shall be my theme.' It was his theme and now it is our theme. It is the theme of our hymns. It is the theme of the Bible. It is the theme of the Christian Church, and no church, no body of Christians has been more loyal to that theme than the Salvation Army. When Christian experience grows pale and anæmic the Church and the world turn again and again to the miracles of grace which have been wrought by the Gospel at the hands of the Salvation Army. It has waged an unyielding war against sin and shame in all parts of the world. It has literally descended into hell and made conquests in the name of the Lord Jesus, and that is why I turn to Vachel Lindsay's poem, *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven,* for in it he has paid his tribute not only to the General, but to the

Gospel and has painted a never-to-be-forgotten picture of redemption.

It sets before us in a striking way a portrait of General Booth and the great army which he led out of the sin and the slums into the cleanness and the white robes of purity. The author has set the words to the music of the old Gospel hymn, 'Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?' It is suggested that the music begin with the bass drums and that the banjos and flutes be introduced later until the climax is reached in the grand chorus with all instruments in full blast, and closing quietly to the sound of singing unaccompanied. It is a reverent but real setting of the great central theme of Gospel redemption.

Lindsay presents to us first of all a great preacher of redemption. General William Booth belongs to that multitude which no man could number, but he was also born to lead. He was not a doctor of divinity or a bishop of any church. He was baptized into the Anglican Church, carried on his ministry in the Methodist and Congregational churches, and, in turn, was expelled from each. His ways were not their ways, but in the end his way brought him to victory. He has been called 'the man whom the churches missed,' for he carried on his work outside of the churches and for a time had the opposition of the Church. His was a strong nature which needed freedom and room to

act. He was born to lead, and leadership is suggested in the opening word of Mr. Lindsay's poem which was written at the time of General Booth's death and pictures him as entering at last into the heaven, where his heart had always been:

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
The saints smiled gravely, and they said,
'He's come.'
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

The words suggest the man and the message which he proclaimed. There was a note of heroism in the Gospel which he preached. His creed as outlined by himself for use in the Salvation Army is refreshingly emphatic and eloquent in its simplicity. One of his last questions is, 'Do you believe in hell?' and the answer given is, 'Yes, all the time.' One of the first questions is, 'When God forgives, does He pardon all at once?' and the answer, 'Yes, all at a stroke. It could not be otherwise. A thorough repentance brings complete forgiveness.' General Booth preached a free and full salvation. Despised and rejected among men for his words and ways, he came at last through high resolve and Christian loyalty unto honour and his name was named among the great. No event in his stormy career revealed more clearly the quality of his life

than when he received from the Mayor and Corporation of London the 'freedom of the city.' Standing among nobility he was as true to his mission there as he was in the city slum. It was just after the Boer War and he told how during the siege of Ladysmith, when people were on the point of starvation, rich men met to distribute food to the hungry. There was difficulty about the distribution, but it was solved along denominational lines. The Episcopal clergyman stood up and said, 'All who belong to my communion, follow me.' The Methodist, the Baptist, the Congregational, and Presbyterian ministers made similar announcements, 'All who belong to my church, follow me.' Then the Salvation Army captain said, 'All you chaps who belong to nobody, follow me,' and, turning to the Lord Mayor, General Booth, with a fine courage, said, 'And I would say here, if there are any chaps here on the platform, or off, who belong to nobody, I shall be very happy if they will follow *me*.' What a setting for an artist! And this quality of redemptive leadership clung to him to the last, and the poet makes us see it.

Booth died blind, and still by faith he trod,
Eyes still dazzled by the ways of God.
Booth led boldly and he looked the chief:
Eagle countenance in sharp relief,
Beard a-flying, air of high command
Unabated in that holy land.

Jesus came from out the Court-House door,
Stretched His hands above the passing poor.
Booth saw not, but led his queer ones there
Round and round the mighty Court-House Square.

It is a great picture of the redeemed. William Booth led a multitude of redeemed souls into the very presence of God. He did not go before the throne of God empty-handed. He did not go alone. When he went to heaven he found there the children of faith whom God had given him.

When General Booth died not one, but scores and hundreds and thousands welcomed him to the home of the soul. It was a well-furnished heaven to which he went. Mr. Lindsay pictures that long retinue as he leads them round and round the Court-House Square of the Celestial City.

Walking lepers followed, rank on rank,
Lurching bravos from the ditches dank,
Drabs from the alleyways and drug-fiends pale—
Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail!
Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath
Unwashed legions with the ways of death—
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Every slum had sent its half-a-score
The round world over—Booth had groaned for more.
Every banner that the wide world flies
Bloomed with glory and transcendent dyes.

Big-voiced lasses made their banjos bang!
Traced, fanatical, they shrieked and sang,
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Hallelujah! It was queer to see
Bull-necked convicts with that land make free!
Loons with bazoos blowing blare, blare, blare—
On, on, upward through the golden air.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl;
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,
Rulers of empires, and of forests green!
The hosts were sandalled and their wings were fire—
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
But their noise played havoc with the angel-choir.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Oh, shout Salvation! It was good to see
Kings and princes by the Lamb set free.
The banjos rattled and the tambourines
Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of Queens!

It is a strange company. No more strange crowd was ever gathered under one banner.

Yet in an instant all that blear review
Marched on spotless, clad in raiment new.
The lame were straightened, withered limbs uncurled
And blind eyes opened on a new sweet world.

What is the meaning of it all? It means that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every

one that believeth. It means that the Lord Jesus Christ still does what He once did. When He came on earth, He proclaimed in His very first sermon the reason of His coming. He came, He said, to preach the Gospel to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to recover the sight of the blind, to set at liberty them that were bruised, and when Christianity ceases to proclaim this message and to perform these miracles it will cease to be the religion of redemption. The evidence of the truth of Christianity is found not in logic but in life, and as far as my voice reaches over sea and land there are men and women and children who can stand up in answer to the call and say, 'He has redeemed me.' Unbelief has no answer to such testimony. No one was ever scolded into the Kingdom, but people are led into that Kingdom by the hand of some one whom they trust and who knows in his own experience that Jesus Christ can make a man whole.

It is a picture of the Redeemer. It is not the great multitude which no man can number which crowds the canvas. It is the Lord Himself upon whom the central light falls; it is General Booth's Saviour and not General Booth that fills the poet's page. It is the King and not the soldier to whom Heaven's high homage is triumphantly given.

And when Booth halted by the curb for prayer
He saw his Master through the flag-filled air.

Christ came gently with a robe and crown
For Booth the soldier while the throng knelt down;
He saw King Jesus—they were face to face,
And he knelt a-weeping in that holy place.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

The song of praise is raised unto Him who washed us from our sins in His own blood and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. Every eye is lifted unto Him and the song of praise is raised in His name. For years I have watched the development of the water power at Niagara. It has now become the greatest light-giving center in the world. Little by little the radius of its illumination has been extended. The towns around the Falls first commanded its flow and then the area widened and is still widening, and obscure villages and towns far removed from the sound of the cataract look up in acknowledgment of the radiance that floods the home and lights the street. The greatest light-giving center for the soul of man is Jesus Christ, and after nineteen centuries the radiance of His illumination is still being enlarged, and people in obscure villages in Africa and in the Canadian northland look up and say, 'In His light we see light.' This is the Gospel which William Booth of the Salvation Army proclaimed, and it is the Gospel which the Church that found no room for him proclaims, for the Gospel is too big, too precious, too timeless, for any

one denomination, and if the General himself were here I think I know what he would say. I am going to say it for him, for I owe something to him myself.

Once he came to the students of the Toronto University and after he had taught us how to sing the Army songs and keep time with our hands he swung out the challenge, 'What are you going to do with your life?' That challenge has never been forgotten. He was not after preachers, or doctors, or teachers, or lawyers, but after preachers and teachers, doctors, and lawyers, who would dedicate their lives to Christ, the King, and I know if he were here now this would be his challenge, 'What are you going to do with your life?' Then I would think he would add this, 'If there is any one who does not belong to the Episcopal Church, or the Roman Catholic Church, or the Presbyterian Church, or the Baptist Church, or the Methodist Church, or to the fellowship of the Friends, or to any church, or to any creed, then let him follow me,' and following that great, free, fearless spirit, he will be led into the presence of Christ the King.

IX

INVICTUS

William Ernest Henley

IN one of his prison letters the Apostle Paul makes the remarkable claim that he had learned the secret of 'contentment.' 'In whatsoever state I am,' he said, 'I have learned therein to be content.' Such a statement presents a challenge to every one of us. What did Paul mean? Did he wish to convey the idea that he was satisfied? Did he wish to give the impression that he was in a state of complacency? The word he uses for 'content' is rather unusual and is used here and nowhere else in the New Testament.

It is essential, therefore, that we first of all define our terms, for there is a contentment that is born of the devil and despair. There is a contentment that is the very negation of true Christianity. There is a contentment which is born of selfishness and which is the bane of educators and reformers, and allows impossible conditions to exist in our social order. It permits the shame and the sin of our great cities to go unchallenged. It cries peace, peace when there is no peace. There is nothing

the devil is so much in love with as peace. He is the father of all those who are satisfied to let well enough alone. Such a contentment defeats the very purposes for which Christ lived and died.

Better far a divine discontent, a discontent that refuses to be satisfied with things as they are, and which calls upon all that is within a man to set things right. It answers the cry of the prophet, 'Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion: put on thy beautiful garments. O Jerusalem . . . Shake thyself from the dust.'

The man who uttered the statement that in every circumstance in life he was content, did not mean that he had surrendered to the inevitable. He meant the very opposite. He meant that he had not surrendered and he never would surrender. He was no devotee of the listless life, nor of the apathetic temperament. He knew life and he had a right to speak. He was no young enthusiast, following a gleam that was half mirage. He was in the prime of a noble manhood. He had been halted in his progress, disappointed in his plans. The despotic hand of Nero had laid hold on him and put him in prison. He was denied his liberty, held up in his plans, and faced defeat and death. Yet Paul, who suffered imprisonment, injustice, and cruelty, contended that he was content.

What was he contented with? Was he contented with Nero's tyranny? with his prison life?

with his defeated purposes? Surely not. He prayed every day that God would set him free to live and to fight once more. What then did he mean? He meant that circumstances had not mastered him. He had mastered circumstances. He meant that in whatever state life found him he was never beaten, never whipped, never driven to the wall. He was the master of his fate. He was the captain of his soul. He was in control of himself, independent, self-sufficient, capable of being a freeman, even when he was in bondage. We see Napoleon, one of the greatest soldiers of all time, standing at the last within his lonely island prison, looking out over the waste of waters, his hands behind his back, a defeated and broken man. Circumstances beyond his control had mastered him and life had been too much for him.

But we see Paul, in his prison, challenging the world to do its worst. He held in his keeping the secret of success. Listen to his challenge. He tells us that he knows how to be rich and not be spoiled. He knows how to be poor and not to be dependent. He had learned the secret of mastery and knew how to be humbled without having his spirit broken, and how to be exalted without becoming vain. He had learned the secret of self-mastery, of self-sufficiency, of independence. He was not satisfied, but he was secure in his soul. He was on good terms with himself. His body was in

prison, but his soul was free. I know of no one who so completely could have made his own the ringing words of William Ernest Henley's poem, *Invictus*.

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the Shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

Sir James M. Barrie has told us how Henley came to write those stirring words. The poet was a patient in the old Edinburgh Infirmary where he had gone in the forlorn hope of saving his foot. Lister, the eminent surgeon, received him with great kindness, and for twenty months he lay, sometimes in one public ward, sometimes in an-

other. 'It was desperate business,' he wrote, 'but he saved my foot and here I am.' It was in these circumstances that he wrote:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

There is a touch of pagan stoicism about these words. They savour somewhat of arrogance, possibly, and were not quite fulfilled in Henley's tempted and tempestuous life. But Paul's challenge has never been gainsaid. Paul had learned the secret of self-control.

He did not always possess it. At one time he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against those who opposed him, and was exceedingly mad against all who differed from him, but now he had himself in hand, and come life, or death, blessing or cursing, he is master of his soul. How did he learn the secret? He tells us that he learned the secret of self-mastery from Jesus. 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.' To be a master one has to have a master. This was what Emerson was trying to say in his great essay on *Self Reliance*. 'Trust thyself, great men have always done so, believing that the Eternal was stirring at their heart, working through their hands, predominating all their being.' Paul gave the

Eternal a name. He called the Eternal, Christ. He believed that the Eternal Spirit of Christ moved at the very fountain springs of his life. He was the Lord's freeman. The great passage in which Paul presents his challenge gives us the principles which enabled him to enter into the possession of that secret, pointing the way to spiritual supremacy. When Christ became his master Paul learned from Jesus three great triumphant principles.

He learned from Jesus *a true philosophy of life.* His motto was, ' Rejoice in the Lord.' He learned how to think in inclusive terms. No man can plant his feet firmly down without first being sure that he is not standing on a fog bank. The greatest need of the modern world is a working philosophy of life, and Paul learned that philosophy at the feet of Jesus. It was a simple philosophy, but it was profound enough to touch the deep places of human sin and human sorrow. At the Cross of Christ he learned that sin was real, but from the risen Christ he learned that righteousness and truth were supreme, and so Paul wrote: ' Be anxious for nothing, but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep guard over your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.' His philosophy of life enthroned God, and brought Him into touch with every circumstance and condition in his life. Paul

learned from Jesus that nothing touched him which could be outside the plan and purpose of God. Everything, even his prison experience, was so interwoven into the warp and woof of his life that all things were bound to work together for good. Spurgeon tells of a farmer who had on the weather vane of his barn the motto, ' God is love.' He was asked if the motto was intended to suggest that God was as changeable as the wind. ' O, no,' said the farmer, ' it means that whatever way the wind blows, God is love.' That is the secret of content, of a quiet heart, of self-mastery. The man who knows that all things work together for his good, and that nothing can separate him from the love of God, is beyond the reach of circumstances, and has in his keeping the secret of a victorious life. He has learned the philosophy of Providence that nothing can touch him that is outside of the plan of God.

In the second place he possessed through Christ *a new perspective of life*. His motto, oft-repeated, contains the words, ' The Lord is at hand.' Upon the horizon he saw the glory of the coming of the Lord. It is perspective that makes life beautiful. Perspective is an artist's word. It calls for depth and distance and direction. Early art was superficial and revealed only a surface view. True art has depth and distance, and reveals the far-off vistas. True art has perspective, and what is life

but the truest and highest of arts? The true life has depth and distance, and 'believes in the centuries against the hours.' Time is always on the side of truth, for a 'thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday, and as a watch in the night.' God does not pay at the close of every day, but in the *end* He pays,' said Anne of Austria to Richelieu. 'He that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.' The man who has this hope can possess his soul in patience and say with the apostle, 'The Lord is at hand.' Such a view of life gives purpose and significance to minor events and steels the soul for any sacrifice. It enables a man to lift his eyes to the hills which rise beyond the range of other men to behold the King in His beauty and the land that stretches afar. It is not Nero upon the imperial throne of Rome that he sees. It is the Lord of all the centuries, high and lifted up, that fills his vision. He does not see beyond him what Henley spoke of as 'the Horror of the Shade,' but the glory of life eternal and, believing in deathless life, he was invincible.

In the third place he received from Jesus *a new psychology*. Jesus taught Paul how to think and what to think about. Was he thinking of his prison? Of Nero's injustice? Of the inevitable sentence of death? No, he was thinking of other things. He was thinking not of defeat and death, but of victory. He was thinking not of Nero on

his throne, but of the Eternal God. He was thinking not of his enemies, but of his friends, who were even then ministering to his necessity, and whose kindness had warmed his heart. Therein lies one of the secrets of self-mastery. We hear in our day a good deal about the power of mental suggestion, and the influence of subconscious thought. Paul long ago gave us the true principles of that philosophy, and he gave it adequate expression in unsurpassed language, 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.' He would have us lift up our hearts, and our eyes unto the Lord, to set our affections upon things above, and to bring our thoughts unto captivity to our great Captain, Christ.

These, then, are the principles learned from Jesus which make for self-mastery, a true and adequate philosophy of life, which sets God, the God of life and love, upon the central throne, a fine and beautiful perspective of life which brings the far-off near, and reveals events and happenings in their true perspective, and the possession of a true mental program, by which thought and imagination are controlled and brought into the service of the soul. These principles may be found reflected in many

quarters, but they are found perfected in the presence of Jesus. The secret of mastery is learned from the Master Himself.

We are told on all hands that we are living today in a new world, and the most vital question that the preacher is called upon to answer is this: 'Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ sufficient for this new world?' Will it do for the twentieth century what it did for the first century? Has not modern psychology made man his own captain? We are told that a man has within him a sufficient source of surplus power to supply all his need. Personality, we are being told, is the great untouched reservoir of sufficiency. There are within each one of us, as there is in the earth, stores of hidden energy waiting to be discovered. Just as the reserves of an army are hidden till a crisis comes and the sources of renewed power in the earth await the call of spring so do the spiritual energies of the soul wait upon the call of the consciousness to bring them into play. We believe in all this modern psychology. Paul believed in it in his own way, but that was not the secret of his self-sufficiency. Instead of curing restlessness and the hunger of the heart, one is apt to bring on an attack of nervous prostration by saying over and over again, 'Every day in every way I am getting better and better,' for it is as dangerous to deceive oneself as to lie to some one else. Paul indeed found within himself

the secret of his sufficiency, but he did not supply that need. He said, ' My God shall supply every need according to his riches in glory, in Christ Jesus.' He had learned the secret from Jesus Himself, who said, ' He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, for the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life. If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.'

I have heard of a celebrated musician who was able to play cathedral music on a little cabinet organ that stirred the hearts of all who heard it. It is always a master that we need, and there is only one Master who is sufficient for our demands. With His hand upon our lives, we can face the world with confidence. With Him at our side each of us may be able to say:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
CHRIST *is the Master of my fate,*
CHRIST *is the Captain of my soul.*

X

EACH IN HIS OWN TONGUE

WILLIAM HERBERT CARRUTH

RELIGION is one of the facts of life. It is one of the facts of human experience. It is one of the facts with which science has to deal, for there are other facts than those which our eye sees and our hand handles. There are astronomical facts and biological facts, mental, moral and spiritual facts which must not be passed by, and one of the outstanding scientific facts with which we have to deal is the fact of religion. There is no doubt about the fact. In his study of the primitive instincts of the American Indian, Longfellow discovered the facts, and placed upon those facts his own interpretation:

> Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,
> Who have faith in God and Nature,
> Who believe, that in all ages
> Every human heart is human,
> That in even savage bosoms
> There are longings, yearnings, strivings
> For the good they comprehend not,
> That the feeble hands and helpless,
> Groping blindly in the darkness,
> Touch God's right hand in that darkness
> And are lifted up and strengthened.

There is no doubt about the facts. No one doubts that people everywhere know something about penitence, pardon, peace, prayer, and the presence of the Eternal. We differ when we attempt the interpretation of the facts.

Psychology seems to think it has disproved certain spiritual experiences when it has interpreted them in the light of their origin. There are in humanity instincts which link man with the lower orders of creation, but there are also instincts which relate him to the heavenly order. Is there any reason why we should interpret the facts of sex and hunger and thirst as relating man to a real world and refuse to interpret the facts of religious experience, faith, hope, love, prayer and penitence as bringing man into fellowship with God? If there is satisfaction for man's hunger in the universe of which he is a part, there is also some heavenly manna provided for the deeper hunger of his soul. If there is bread that comes from wheat there is also bread that comes from God. The facts of spiritual experience which fill the world cannot be doubted. Men do pray. Men do feel after God. Men do experience conversion. But, says the materialist, all these facts can be explained just as the thunder can be explained. They are the product of natural causes. They come out of the physical universe. No, says the idealist, they are the product of mental and psychical processes. They come be-

cause of some angel's touch. They belong to the mystical and spiritual, but they have no definite relation to a personal God. The Christian interpretation, however, relates religious experiences to God as the author. God speaks but some fail to understand and miss the message, while others have ears to hear.

> Where I heard noise and you saw flame
> Some one man knew God called his name.

The fact is not in dispute. The interpretations may differ, but only one interpretation can answer to the fact.

This is the theme of a short poem of four verses by William Herbert Carruth. The poem is called *Each in His Own Tongue* and is known wherever the language in which it is written is known. The poem admits the facts of life and shows that men have differing interpretations of the same experience.

In the first verse the poet presents to us in brief but beautiful form the facts of the progress and order of the material world. He gathers the geological and biological facts which the science of the naturalist has gathered:

> *A fire-mist and a planet,—*
> *A crystal and a cell,—*
> *A jellyfish and a saurian,*
> *And caves where the cave-men dwell;*

Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod,—
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God.

The facts cannot be gainsaid. There is progress, order, development in the world. Like Napoleon we point to the stars of the sky, and say, 'Who made all these?' and the poet answers:

Some call it Evolution
And others call it God.

That, however, is poetry. The answer of pure prose is 'God working in evolution.' Of itself evolution is nothing. It is a word. It is a word to describe God's way of doing things. Evolution of itself is helpless, evolution is merely a word to describe how God works. He begins at the beginning. He begins with a world that is waste and void and dark, but upon the face of the deep His Spirit broods and out of the chaos and confusion, order and a beautiful universe come in God's good time. It is God's way. 'First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.'

In the second verse the facts of beauty are presented to us. In the universe of the spirit there are three great worlds: the world of truth, the world of goodness, the world of beauty. Science tells us that the eye never perceived the beauty of

the world until the microscope revealed it. How marvellously beautiful is the world in which we live: the snow crystal, the dewdrop, the heather bell, the flower that is born to blush unseen, the soft green shade of the grass, the brilliant glory of autumn, these facts thrill our spirits. Why do they thrill and stir us so? No lovelier setting was ever made for beauty than in the verse which reflects the beauty, not of California, nor of the sunny south, but of Kansas, where he was when he wrote the words; for Kansas, some of us know, has beauty unrivalled:

A haze on the far horizon,
The infinite, tender sky,
The ripe, rich tint of the cornfields,
And the wild geese sailing high,—
And all over upland and lowland
The charm of the goldenrod,—
Some of us call it Autumn
And others call it God.

Again we answer that it is not a choice between autumn and God, for autumn itself is God's handiwork. Beauty is the garment of God. We too often forget that beauty is an attribute of God Himself. 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.' It was a true instinct that has led the people of all the world to make their places of worship beautiful, and it was the leading of the

Spirit of God that has made the Church the mother of the fine arts, of painting, of sculpture, and of music. What is the most beautiful thing in the world? I will tell you. It is not of earth or sea or sky or air. It is the face of some one you love. It may be the wrinkled face of age, or the dimpled face of childhood, and the glory of God that shines in the face of Jesus is the most beautiful thing in the world.

I know what beauty is, for Thou
  Hast set the world within my heart;
  Of me Thou madest it a part;
I never loved it more than now.

But I leave all, O Son of man,
  Put off my shoes, and come to Thee,
  Most lovely Thou of all I see,
Most potent Thou of all that can!

In the third stanza the poet presents to us the fact of human aspiration. The outstanding fact of our humanity is that we aspire. The question is in all our hearts, 'What lack I yet?' In one of the great books on religion these words are to be found: 'If the gods went their way and were satisfied and the beasts went their way and were satisfied, the unrest of man can only mean that he is not rightly related to his present life.' That is so. These strong yearnings and longings of the soul are facts. They are facts subject to verification as

are the facts of physics or of chemistry. They can be tested in the laboratory of experience and are repeated in every age and in every land. We are not satisfied; we aspire, we hope, we look up, we pray. What is the explanation?

Like tides on a crescent sea-beach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in,—
Come from the mystic ocean,
Whose rim no foot has trod,—
Some of us call it Longing,
And others call it God.

To call it Longing leaves the mystery where it was, but to call it God satisfies. The longing that stirs at our hearts is the hunger of the soul for bread, the thirst of the spirit for the water of life. 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God,' said Augustine, 'and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.' It is even so. Our hearts cry out for the living God. Show us the Father and we will be satisfied.

In the fourth stanza we are brought face to face with the challenging facts of duty, of moral obligation, of the thundering voice of conscience. Kant, the philosopher, said there were only two massive facts in the universe, one the starry heavens without, and the other the moral law within. The facts are written on every page of history:

A picket frozen on duty,—
A mother starved for her brood,—
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
And Jesus on the rood;
And millions who, humble and nameless,
The straight, hard pathway plod,—
Some call it Consecration,
And others call it God.

It cannot be doubted, of course, that men without consciously acknowledging God have faced death for duty's sake. There are many who are hesitant to admit this. There were many and there are still some who could not follow John Hay's eulogy on Jim Bludso:

He seen his duty, a dead sure thing,
And went for it thar and then,
And Christ ain't a-going to be too hard
On a man that died for man.

Still the roots of duty are buried deep. The hidden springs of conduct are in the dark, deep recesses of the soul, and men are motived by influences they cannot define, for we live and move and have our being in God. Surely it is the simplest, as it is the most profound, of all interpretations to say that the voice of conscience is the voice of God in the soul of man. Duty that roots itself in any sort of a physical or psychological 'complex' speaks not in thunder but in whispering reminis-

cence. Certainty and conviction come to men who believe that in their conscience there is a command, prefaced with the mandate, 'Thus saith the Lord.'

This, then, is the problem we face. The facts are plain. How shall we interpret them? In the days of the early Church people of all lands gathered in Jerusalem and there came face to face with facts. Each man heard in his own tongue the wonderful words of God. That is the incident which gave Mr. Carruth the title and perhaps the thought of his poem, *Each in His Own Tongue*. There were many interpretations as usual. Some said wine. These men were drunk. That is surely the last limit to which materialism could go. No, neither the wine of life nor the wine of science was the true interpretation. The explanation was Christ. Christ was speaking, Christ was working. Christ was filling the world with His Spirit. That is the explanation. 'God was in Christ.' There you find the secret of order, and the mastery of nature. There you find beauty unsurpassed. In Him all our restlessness is hushed, the hunger of the heart satisfied. There you find duty sublimed into devotion, for did not He say, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me'? Christ speaks in every man's tongue, and in a friendly letter written by Mr. Carruth he himself suggests that

only Christ can interpret and satisfy. He is thinking of our restless, storm-tossed world. He writes:

> World ruin it seems to the spoiler,
> To the prophet a new age begun,
> For the burden-bearer and toiler
> Are taking their place in the sun.
> So fear not, tho' palaces totter
> And the scheme of the Past is unmade;
> The voice that stilled Galilee's water,
> Calms the tempest so: 'Be not afraid.'

Israel Zangwill has been telling the American people that Christianity is bankrupt. Well, it is not Christianity but men's interpretations that are bankrupt. Christianity can never be bankrupt for all the riches of grace and glory are in Christ Jesus. The inexhaustible riches of Christ are ours. Think of that! We know from the microscope something of the inexhaustible riches of the earth. We know from the telescope and the spectroscope the inexhaustible riches of the sky, and in Christ Jesus, the express image of God, the very effulgence of His glory, we know the inexhaustible riches of life here, and in the land beyond the border. 'In Him all things hold together.'

XI

THE EVERLASTING MERCY

JOHN MASEFIELD

THE problem of religion is not to find mercy. That is not the problem. The Bible is very emphatic on that point. God's mercy is everlasting. 'Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.' 'Thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon thee.' 'But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and in truth.' 'The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.' Take your Bible and see that this is the refrain from beginning to end. 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.'

The problem of religion is not to find mercy. The problem is to find penitence. 'Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord.' His banner is always flung to the breeze and on it are imprinted the words, 'He will abundantly pardon.' It is over impenitence that the Saviour weeps. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often

would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not.' When the prodigal said, 'I will arise and go to my father,' he found that his father met him with the robe and the ring and the royal welcome. When the publican fell upon his face and said, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner,' he arose and went down to his home justified by the grace of God.

No more pathetic and tragic picture of human sin was ever penned than was penned by John Masefield in *The Everlasting Mercy*. Saul Kane, of whom the story is told, was everything he ought not to be. Even as a lad he bit his father's hand and broke his mother's heart. He was a drunkard, a libertine, coarse in every fiber of his being, a human wreck, a piece of immoral driftwood in the cross-currents of the world. He lived, he said, 'in disbelief of heaven.' He drank; he fought; he poached; he cursed, and nineteen times he went to jail. Yet this man found mercy and light and purity. He became so pure in heart by the grace of God that his last words sang of purity:

O lovely lily clean,
O lily springing green,
O lily bursting white,
Dear lily of delight,
Spring in my heart agen
That I may flower to men.

He came to Christ in his sin and shame, just as he was. It was a change, sudden, revolutionary, transforming. In his own language something broke inside his brain. Old things passed away and all things suddenly became new.

As a matter of fact, however, there is no such thing as a sudden conversion. If we have eyes to see and ears to hear we will discover that God has been preparing the soul in a marvellous way for its great discovery. If we could tell the tale of the thief on the cross we would discover a mother's love, a sensitive conscience, a slumbering sense of the spiritual, a movement of the Spirit of God upon his spirit. It was so with the Apostle Paul. The Master he met on his way referred to the struggle that had been going on in his soul when He said, 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' It was so with Saul Kane. While the story told in the poem rolls on like the tide yet the experiences are clear and plain.

We see him at a prizefight, a beastly and brutal affair. Even he, who was so used to brutality, sickened at the sight.

> *The five and forty human faces,*
> *Inflamed by drink and going to races,*
> *Faces of men who'd never been*
> *Merry or true or live or clean.*

The man with whom he fought was a partner in

crime with himself but in this instance was in the right, and Saul Kane knew that he himself was in the wrong.

'I'm fighting to defend a lie.
And this moonshiny evening's fun
Is worse than aught I've ever done.'

This is the first awakening of his conscience, the first pang that pierced his spirit.

After the fight was over in which he was victor, the crowd followed him to the public house, and spent the night in a drunken debauch. The scene pictured is well-nigh unspeakable, and while he not only participated in it but led and dominated it, his soul somehow revolted at the filth and shame of it all. In the night he rose from his place among the sleeping comrades of his shame and sin and went to the window for a breath of air.

I opened window wide and leaned
Out of that pigstye of the fiend
And felt a cool wind go like grace
About the sleeping market-place.
The clock struck three, and sweetly, slowly,
The bells chimed Holy, Holy, Holy.

The night air and the cool wind cleared his brain and he began to think. It was better for him to die than live. Death ended all anyway, he said.

'And no one lives again, but dies,
And all the bright goes out of eyes,
And all the skill goes out of hands,
And all the wise brain understands,
And all the beauty, all the power
Is cut down like a withered flower.
In all the show from birth to rest
I give the poor dumb cattle best.'

The suggestion of suicide came to him but he put it away and in a fury of madness, half-naked, fled into the night with two brass lamps burning in his hand, and as he ran he cried, 'I am Satan, newly come from hell.' He spied the fire bell, and taking the rope in his hand he rang the bell until the town was all astir and then he fled from the pursuing crowd and hid himself in the dark recesses of the tavern. When he emerged in the morning he met the old minister of the town whom he charged with cant, hypocrisy and worldliness.

For you take gold to teach God's ways
And teach man how to sing God's praise.
And now I'll tell you what you teach
In downright honest English speech.

The old parson did not argue with him. Argument in religion never gets very far, and the minister is wise who avoids it. It only confirms people in their own opinions, but he did put a question to this half-crazed, half-drunken man:

'Then, as to whether true or sham
That book of Christ, Whose priest I am;
The Bible is a lie, say you,
Where do you stand, suppose it true?'

This is the issue. Tell me, where do you stand? Supposing all that the Bible says of sin, of judgment, and of Christ and the Cross is true, where do you stand? Saul Kane paused to think and a second time the Spirit of God knocked at the closed door of his life.

Looking for trouble, and searching for his companion in sin, he wandered off to the edge of the village, but finally returned to the lighted marketplace where he spied a little lad crying because his mother had whipped him and left him standing in the street to wait for her return. There was something in Saul Kane that responded to the sorrow and appeal of the little child.

'Each one could be a Jesus mild,
Each one has been a little child,
A little child with laughing look,
A lovely white unwritten book;
A book that God will take, my friend,
As each goes out at journey's end.'

The neighbours were horrified, however, to see the lad enjoying the company of the town derelict and when the boy's mother returned in a torrent of passionate entreaty and reproach she poured out her

soul in sorrow and fear for the boy that was still left to her and had now like the rest, as she thought, taken the road to hell. He was smitten in his soul.

I'd often heard religious ranters,
And put them down as windy canters,
But this old mother made me see
The harm I done by being me.

There was nothing to do but to drown his thought and remorse in drink. That is always the coward's way. Afraid to face himself he administered to himself a temporary anæsthetic. In the dirty drinking and gambling den he stood again in the crowd and called on all to drink with him. Nevertheless, a strange feeling dominated and possessed him, and the scathing, scorching words of the mother were burning in his soul and he kept saying to himself, 'What has come to me to-night?' Within an hour he knew. As he afterwards said:

Our Fates are strange, and no one knows his;
Our lovely Saviour Christ disposes.

Into the disgusting place a young woman with a pure soul and a sweet face came. She was well known, for she always made the rounds of the drinking-dens before the closing hour, and in her Quaker dress, and with her winsome grace there was none that did not listen and none that did not

reverence her. This night, however, Saul Kane was mad, and called upon her to lead them in the song. She stepped up to him, refusing to be insulted and, looking him in the face as if her very spirit cried, she said:

'Saul Kane,' she said, 'when next you drink,
Do me the gentleness to think
That every drop of drink accursed
Makes Christ within you die of thirst,
That every dirty word you say
Is one more flint upon His way,
Another thorn about His head,
Another mock by where He tread,
Another nail, another cross.
All that you are is that Christ's loss.'

Then it was that something broke inside his brain. One of the songs he called for was, 'Oh, who is that knocking at the door?' Some one now indeed and in truth was knocking. The crowd had been turned out and the public house was closed, but he was standing alone with her beside the door. She was searching his face for she knew the everlasting mercy of God that could save unto the uttermost. Suddenly she turned and said, 'He waits until you knock,' and in a moment was gone. Alone in the night he stood. The Great Searcher had found him at last and from Him he could no longer flee. God had discovered his hiding place

and a voice bayed like bloodhounds in his head, and this is what it said:

'The water's going out to sea
And there's a great moon calling me;
But there's a great sun calls the moon,
And all God's bells will carol soon
For joy and glory and delight
Of some one coming home to-night.'

Then the miracle of miracles took place. No miracle performed in the world of things can compare with one perfected in the realm of the Spirit. His very soul cried out and in a moment the old garments of his filthy life fell from his soul and he stood clothed in his right mind and in the pure linen of a right life.

I did not think, I did not strive,
The deep peace burnt my me alive;
The bolted door had broken in,
I knew that I had done with sin.
I knew that Christ had given me birth
To brother all the souls on earth,
And every bird and every beast
Should share the crumbs broke at the feast.

This is always the way. It is not our striving but God's seeking that brings the great salvation.

Two things immediately followed. The world became a new world to Saul Kane. The same old world that had been coarse and cruel became sud-

denly sweet and beautiful, for the world is like a mirror and reflects our own thoughts and our own souls. Saul's clouded, sin-stained mind had seen only hopelessness and despair. Now his mind illumined by the light of God saw beauty and peace everywhere:

O glory of the lighted mind.
How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind.
The station brook, to my new eyes,
Was babbling out of Paradise,
The waters rushing from the rain
Were singing Christ has risen again.
I thought all earthly creatures knelt
From rapture of the joy I felt.

Everything in heaven became a symbol to him of the spiritual. He saw a meaning in life that he had hitherto missed:

All earthly things that blessèd morning
Were everlasting joy and warning.
The gate was Jesus' way made plain,
The mole was Satan foiled again,
Black blinded Satan snouting way
Along the red of Adam's clay;
The mist was error and damnation,
The lane the road unto salvation.
Out of the mist into the light,
O blessèd gift of inner sight.

This is what we need to give us a new heaven and a new earth. We need the blessed gift of the inner

sight. We need the glory of the lighted mind for to him that is in Christ Jesus old things have passed away, and behold, all things have become new.

The second thing that followed upon Saul Kane's conversion was that he immediately went to work. Sin had made him an idler. Christ changed him into a worker. Sin had made him a social liability; Christ made him over into a social asset. The greatest socializing power in the world is the redeeming, regenerating gospel of the grace of God. Sin had made him a parasite. Christ made him a ploughman and out on the farm he found his task. It was a humble task but it was a task. From the hands of old farmer Callow he took the reins and in the field of honest toil he put his new faith to the test:

I kneeled there in the muddy fallow,
I knew that Christ was there with Callow,
That Christ was standing there with me,
That Christ had taught me what to be,
That I should plough, and as I ploughed
My Saviour Christ would sing aloud,
And as I drove the clods apart
Christ would be ploughing in my heart,
Through rest-harrow and bitter roots,
Through all my bad life's rotten fruits.

Out there in the fields with God the thought of Christ's everlasting mercy sang in his soul, the Christ who holds the open gate, and as the seasons

came and went love and light and laughter filled the soul of this once beaten and broken man, and purity and peace became his constant song.

The problem of religion is not to find mercy but to find penitence, and you will find a penitent heart when you think of all you might have been, of all you might have done, of your broken promises, and above all when you stand before Christ's Cross, where sorrow cried out in love for you. Do not argue about it. Accept it and come to the everlasting mercy.

XII

THE MAN WITH THE HOE

EDWIN MARKHAM

WHATEVER else of truth and revelation is yet to break forth from the immortal, inexhaustible, and imperishable first chapter of Genesis, one great truth at least shines out from the page like a lustrous jewel. Undimmed by the centuries with all their progress in science and philosophy the truth that God and man are bound as by a family tie shines on. This is the revelation expressed and proclaimed in the inspiring, revolutionary statement of the words, 'God created man in his own image.' Made out of the dust of the earth man is a child of God. Child of the earth, he is created in the image of God. What does that mean? What is the image of God? Mediæval theologians used to argue that the name of God was written on the face of men. In a fanciful way, by the formation of eyes and nose and ears, they came to the conclusion that the words *homo dei* could be discovered on the face of every man. That is only fancy, for the image of God belongs not to bodily appearances, but to the spirit.

If you will turn with me to a little book of less than fifty pages, entitled *The Westminster Shorter Catechism,* you will find the answer. Catechisms, I know, are somewhat out of date in these days of the newer pedagogy, but, nevertheless, there are some things of the old order that abide. In answer to the question, 'How did God create man?' this little theological document gives this answer, 'God created man male and female after His own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.' Here in a sentence we have the marks of a man. The image of God in man is revealed in man's possession of knowledge. Man is like God in being intelligent. Righteousness is another attribute of the image of God. Man is like God in being moral and in possession of a conscience. Holiness belongs also to the image of God. Man is like God in being in love with the white light of purity. Dominion belongs also to that image. Man is like God in being a master and not a slave, in using the world for higher ends and not in being used by it. What a high and noble ideal it is, an ideal that kept the people of the Bible from being slaves themselves and from permitting them to own slaves in perpetuity.

Now this is a supreme, moral principle that is timeless and immutable. Man is an end in himself, and not a means to anything else. He stands in the midst of the universe, holding dominion over

the forces of life. He is supreme in the sphere of material things. All things are to be under him. Anything that degrades or destroys or hurts him is wrong. The one thing that outweighs all other values is the soul of man. Let a single life be at stake and wireless signals flash, ships change their course; whole communities organize; traffic stops. In his book, *The Reconstruction of Religion,* Professor Ellwood says: 'The central teaching of all social religions and of the religion of Jesus in particular is the supreme worth of men no matter what their race, class or condition may be.' This is the message of Edwin Markham's poem, *The Man With the Hoe.* There are many who remember what a sensation these verses made when first published. He had been fascinated by the painting, *The Man With the Hoe,* by Millet. The great French painter had often used his brush to preach a sermon as a protest against social misery. Throwing aside all mythological subjects, he painted the things he saw and knew. He, himself, had known the misery of dire poverty and his canvases, such as *The Reapers, The Gleaners, The Woodcutter* and *The Shepherd,* reveal how well he knew the common people. He painted the picture of *The Angelus* with its stirring spiritual message, of workers in the field bowing in reverence as the call to prayer came to them out of the air; but in *The Man With the Hoe,* he had proclaimed the

condition of the common toilers of the soil, and had pictured a man leaning on his hoe, broken in spirit, bent in body, the light of his soul having died out.

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

Gazing upon this picture the soul of the poet took fire and he said:

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
To feel the passion of Eternity?
Is this the Dream He dreamed who shaped the suns
And marked their ways upon the ancient deep?
Down all the stretch of Hell to its last gulf
There is no shape more terrible than this—
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed—
More filled with signs and portents for the soul—
More fraught with menace to the universe.

This is a challenge which society and the Christian Church must face. For here is a man born in the

image of God, born for knowledge, for righteousness, for holiness, for lordly dominion, who had become a slave, a servile thing of the dust. There is here not only cause for tears but for terror. A whole French Revolution and the horror of Russian bolshevism are all here:

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
How will the Future reckon with this Man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world!
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb Terror shall reply to God,
After the silence of the centuries?

The painting of Millet and the poetry of Markham combine to make great preaching. The picture they present challenges the social order that permits such a thing to exist. It challenges our conscience and proclaims the principle of all social reconstruction that we are our brother's keeper. A society that permits a man to be used as a thing, a chattel, a slave, is not a society at all. It is a machine, and a machine that weaves into its product the warp and woof of human life should be scrapped. We are flooded to-day with new social and economic theories and are lost in the maze of attempted social reconstruction. Few of us, perhaps, have the time or ability to analyze these so-

cial and economic theories, but there are certain Christian simplicities that are easy for us to understand and great and sacred enough upon which to build the new civilization of to-morrow. That civilization must be built upon the principle that human personality is the one priceless thing in the world, that it is not a means to any end, and that little children, helpless womanhood and dependent manhood may not be exploited for the comfort or profit of any man or any body of men in the world. The closing words of Lord Charnwood's *Life of Lincoln* consist of a quotation from the great American which was the sacred motive of all his strong, wise, and unselfish life. 'As I would not be a slave so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy.' The words of Jesus are clear and unmistakable. 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' 'For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' The New Testament repeats the claim: 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' Frank Mason North's great lines emphasize it:

In haunts of wretchedness and need,
On shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
From paths where hide the lures of greed,
We catch the vision of Thy tears.

From tender childhood's helplessness,
From woman's grief, man's burdened toil,
From famished souls, from sorrow's stress,
Thy heart has never known recoil.

The triumph of every social reform that history knows anything about has come through the proclamation of this truth. Every advance towards liberty has been brought about by a realization of the absolute worth of human personality. In the light of the truth that man is made in the image of God, the slum and the sweatshop become not merely disgraces and blots upon our social system, but crimes against man and against Almighty God. All forms of man's inhumanity to man go down before the preaching of this eternal truth. In the very first chapter of the Bible man finds the charter of his liberty. Domestic slavery, holding its own for centuries, at last disappeared and was destroyed before the light that shone from the face of even a slave made in the image of God, and industrial slavery of all kinds, here or in China, in Europe or in Africa, the exploitation of little children in the workshops of the world, all forms of trade that degrade and harm the spirit and soul of

mankind, all commerce in drink and drugs, all governments that are built on the theory that men are food for powder, are condemned and outlawed in the presence of this divine proclamation.

There is a recent picture by the Scottish artist Gibbs, entitled *The Dream of Christmas*. It is a picture of a European city with its towers and spires rising in the moonlight, and through one of the narrow streets Christ passes with His shepherd's staff in hand and a little, ragged, homeless child in His left arm. It is only personality that is priceless. This is why the religion of Jesus must always be revolutionary. It must be revolutionary until the whole world comes to understand that all men are brothers, that human life is the one priceless thing in the world and that all government and legislation, all industry and all science must become the servants of humanity to the end that all men may come to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Jesus proclaimed the infinite value of every man by His death on the Cross, and no man dare make a tool or a slave out of a 'brother for whom Christ died.'

Doubtless Edwin Markham was right in his interpretation of Millet's painting. There may be, however, in the painting an additional thought. Man is not only responsible for his brother. He is responsible for himself. Born in the image of God, he is born to have dominion not only over the

things about him but over himself. The one unconquerable thing in the world is a man's own soul. It will not do to say that circumstances are his master. Circumstances are only plastic clay in the hands of character. It will not do for John Vance Cheney to answer Edwin Markham by saying:

> Need was, need is, and need will ever be
> For him and such as he.

There is something brutal about such a view. Man is born to have dominion and within his own possession is his indomitable will. Lincoln was right when he said that he would not own a slave, neither would he be a slave. There is much in that. There is something in the iron, grim determination of the Scottish character as it is voiced by Robert Burns:

> Wha will be a traitor knave?
> Wha can fill a coward's grave?
> Wha sae base as be a slave?
> Let him turn and flee!

It is always possible for a man to contend with circumstances and to rise above his environment. It is given to him to master the conditions under which he has to live, and keep his soul free. There is a fine passage in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* where Uncle Tom, driven to the wall, with the whip waiting for

his naked body, and brutality ready to crush him, answers his cruel and brutal master who says to him, ' How would you like to be tied to a tree and have a slow fire lit up 'round you? ' ' Mas'r,' said Tom, ' I know you can do dreadful things, but after you've killed the body there ain't any more ye can do. And, oh, there's all eternity to come after that.'

That has been the glory of martyrdom in all history, that men have chosen to die rather than be slaves of sin or tyranny. God means a man to look up, not down, to look out, and not merely in, to see the stars as well as to see the soil, and however much we may admire Edwin Markham's *The Man With the Hoe,* there is something equally great if not greater and more familiar in that passage in John Bunyan which Theodore Roosevelt gloried in and from which he often preached. Let me renew your acquaintance with Bunyan. The scene is laid in the Interpreter's house and Christiana and her family have come thither. The Interpreter showed them ' into a room where was a man that could look no way but downwards, with a muck-rake in his hand: there stood one also over his head with a celestial crown in his hand, and proffered him that crown for his muck-rake: but the man did neither look up nor regard, but rake to himself the straws, the small sticks, and dust of the floor. Then said Christiana, I persuade my-

self that I know somewhat of the meaning of this; for this is the figure of a man of this world; is it not, good sir? Thou hast said right, said he; and his muck-rake doth show his carnal mind. And, whereas thou seest him rather give heed to take up straws and sticks, and the dust of the floor, than to what He says that calls to him from above, with the celestial crown in His hand; it is to show, that heaven is but as a fable to some, and that things here are counted the only things substantial. Now, whereas it was also showed thee that this man could look no way but downwards, it is to let thee know that earthly things, when they are with power upon men's minds, quite carry their hearts away from God.'

We are told on all hands that the sense of sin is dying out in the world. I believe it is true. I believe with Sir Oliver Lodge that men are not troubled about their sins as they were in the days of old, and I think I know why. It is because the sense of man's divine and immortal destiny has become dim and faint. It is only in the presence of perfection that imperfection is revealed. It is only in the presence of purity that impurity becomes intolerable. It is only in the presence of God that man becomes conscious of his need. 'If I had not come,' said Jesus, 'ye would not have known sin.' If man is only the product of the forces of life, if he is only the last product of the

evolution of the slime of earth, then of course he will not be too much disturbed when he sinks back into that slime, but if he is a child of God and heir of immortality, born in the image of God, then he will be conscious of the pit into which he has fallen. It is the thought of man's glorious destiny that keeps the stars in his sky.

'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.' The New Testament faces the issue squarely and asserts that is not a true picture of man, for all things are not yet under him, but there is hope, for we see one man, even Jesus, and He is crowned with glory and honour. We see Him and in His presence we discover how God's image has been defaced in us, and how far short we have come of attaining to that high calling to which we have been called. In one of his stories George Macdonald tells of a country preacher who found on his doorstep a woman of the street, helpless and homeless. Like a Christian man he took her into his home, comforted her, and led her back to the paths of purity and peace. During that interview

the little daughter asked her mother, 'Who is in the parlour with father?' and the wise mother replied, 'It is an angel, dear, who has lost her way, and your father is showing her the way back.'

The world is full of those who have lost their way. They have lost their way in a mist of philosophical speculation, in the materialism and worldliness of every-day life, in the rush and roar of our complex civilization, in the dark by-paths of unmoral and immoral living. Man is not a machine. He is not the last accidental result of atomic forces. He is a living soul. He is a child of God. In him is the passion for immortality, and the Lord Jesus Christ is his Master, his Redeemer and his Lord.

XIII

COLUMBUS

Joaquin Miller

TWENTY-FIVE years after the Apostle Paul had turned his face towards the Gospel light he stood on trial for his faith before a Roman tribunal. Twenty-five years is a long stretch in the life of a man whose years were limited to three-score and five, for if Paul were thirty-six when he became a Christian he was, at the time of his trial, sixty-one years of age. He was looking back over a quarter of a century which had been filled with sacrifice and service, with bonds and imprisonments.

Twenty-five years can do a great deal to our visions. Their beginning may be in the bright light of a glowing noonday but their glory may fade into the light of common day. Twenty-five years can steal away our enthusiasm, and in the face of the dull, drab drudgery which follows, our dreams can fade and vanish over the horizon.

The Apostle, however, confessed that after twenty-five years his vision still led him on and motived his life. His Christian experience began

in the blinding light of a miraculous revelation. Whether in the body or out of it he could never tell. All he knew was, that journeying from Jerusalem with credentials from the High Priest to imprison and to kill, suddenly he had met Christ on the high road near the ancient city of Damascus. His heart had been hot with hate and his face had been set towards the persecution of those who held the Christian faith. Suddenly the sky fell, a voice called his name, and Christ stood by his side summoning him to service.

That vision changed his life. From that day he became a different man. He was no visionary, no dreamer, no impressionist. He was a particularly hard-headed, keenly intellectual and practical-minded man, and there is little chance that he could have been deceived by an illusion. He was the last man in the world to follow an illusion for a quarter of a century. Yet held up by a vision, he had been true to it through a long and bitter struggle. He had anchored his life to the invisible and was ready to follow his Lord to the last limit of the world.

Dreamer of dreams? We take the taunt with gladness
Knowing that God beyond the years you see
Has wrought the dreams that count with you for madness
Into the texture of the world to be.

This, then, is my theme. Victory comes because of vision, and where there is no vision the people cast off restraint. Long ago it was said of one who became a prince and a power in the world, 'Behold, this dreamer cometh'; and this dreamer of dreams who had left his dull, gray life behind him, pushed on into the new day of a brighter tomorrow. God leads His people by dreams and visions. If the vision that you think you see beckons you to something you are sure you can do, then it is not a vision. If it beckons you to do something you feel you cannot do, then follow it—to the very margin of the world. The true vision lures us on to what the world regards as impossible.

George Stephenson, the inventor of the steam engine, was a dreamer of dreams, but people thought he was just crazy. He dreamed a dream of a steam engine that could pull heavy loads and travel twice as fast as a racehorse, and a dignified member of the British House of Commons said: 'What can be more absurd and ridiculous than the prospect held out of locomotives travelling twice as fast as horses? We should as soon expect the people of Woolwich to suffer themselves to be fired off upon one of Congreve's rockets as to trust themselves to the mercy of such a machine, going at such a rate. We trust that Parliament will, in all the railways it may grant, limit the speed to eight or nine miles an hour, which is as great as can be

ventured on.' But for fifteen years Stephenson struggled on and at last his dream came true.

Joaquin Miller has pictured Columbus as a dreamer defying all the facts of life and sailing out into the ocean's trackless mystery.

'Behind him lay the gray Azores,
Behind the Gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores,
Before him only shoreless seas.
The good mate said: 'Now must we pray,
For lo! the very stars are gone.
Brave Admiral, speak, what shall I say?'
'Why, say "Sail on! sail on! and on!"'

'My men grow mutinous day by day;
My men grow ghastly, wan and weak'—
The stout mate thought of home; a spray
Of salt wave washed his swarthy cheek.
'What shall I say, brave Admiral, say,
If we sight naught but seas at dawn?'
'Why, you shall say at break of day,
"Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!"'

Sailing on through mist and murk the dream of Columbus came true. The dream and the vision belong to the fabric of faith, and faith is the victory that overcomes the world. A well-known scientist recently commenting upon the great roll of heroes celebrated in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, continues that high record of faith as follows:

'By faith Columbus set out in an open boat, to go around the unknown world.

'By faith the Pilgrim fathers left their homes, and landed on the stern and rockbound coast of New England. They sought liberty to worship God and became our spiritual forefathers.

'By faith Washington took up arms against an empire whose morning drum-beats encircled the world.

'By faith Jefferson bought the land wherein millions now live, although people laughed at him for acquiring useless and inaccessible territory.

'By faith our fathers crossed the prairies as, of old, their fathers crossed the sea, to make the West as the East, the homestead of the free.

'By faith a band of American missionaries went to the cannibal islands and gave us Hawaii.

'And what shall I say of those who, by faith, removed mountains and bridged rivers; who brought waters to a thirsty land and made the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose; who gave sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, and caused the lame to walk; who went over the sea to share the peril of oppressed peoples; who suffered torment and death from fire and smoke; who took food to the starving in strange lands; who went down to the sea in ships, and up into the air like eagles?'

It was a vision of Jesus Christ, calling him from his long and deep-seated prejudice, which chal-

lenged Saul of Tarsus and which, at last, through him, changed the current of history.

Twenty-five years after he had seen Christ Paul stood before Agrippa the king, and confessed that he had not been 'disobedient to the heavenly vision.' Through darkness and light, through hope and faith, through success and failure, through long marches and shipwreck, through peril of robbers, through hunger and thirst, he had carried on, following the vision which had first captivated his spirit. It is not easy to keep on following the gleam when the sun goes down and the stars fade out. We may succeed, perhaps, in hitching our wagon to a star, but it is a more difficult matter to follow the star across the desert over the long, lonely, trackless level that runs out to the horizon. But the dream that does not issue in action is a delusion. Unless we can face the drudgery of the long day's task, we had better not set out on the quest. It takes time and patience to make the dream come true.

The other day a scientist, working quietly in his laboratory, discovered one of the missing elements belonging to the fundamental substratum of the universe. He had followed the dream for years and had seen the vision, and through all those quiet, silent, obscure days he had searched quietly among the evasive forces of life until the long, oftentimes unavailing search, ended in victory.

The dream and the duty are eternally wedded. Columbus pressed on and on after the vision that held his heart, and would not let him go.

They sailed and sailed, as winds might blow,
Until at last the blanched mate said:
'Why, now not even God would know
Should I and all my men fall dead.
These very winds forget their way,
For God from these dread seas is gone.
Now speak, brave Admiral, speak and say'—
He said: 'Sail on! sail on! and on!'

They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the mate:
'This mad sea shows his teeth to-night.
He curls his lip, he lies in wait,
With lifted teeth, as if to bite!
Brave Admiral, say but one good word:
What shall we do when hope is gone?'
The words leapt like a leaping sword:
'Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!'

The way is long and at times dangerous, but if the vision be real and the dream God-given it issues at last in a fine fulfillment. First the dream, then the long, long discipline. Theodore Thomas, who did so much for American music, had an uphill struggle after he had seen the vision which mastered him in his youth. Thinking of the long road which he was taking and the sacrifice he was enduring, he said: 'I have gone without food longer than

I should, I have walked when I could not afford to ride, I have even played when my hands were cold. But I shall succeed, for I shall never give up my belief that at last the people will come to me, and my concerts will be crowded. I have undying faith in the latent musical appreciation of the American public.' He kept on until his dream came true.

How true this is of the Christian life! What a vision we have when first we meet with Christ in the way! How beautiful life is!

> Heaven above is softer blue,
> Earth beneath is sweeter green.

How sweet the music! What a time of blossoming spring it is! Then follows the long stretch across the open, the hard climb up the hill and down the valley until at last we come to victory. After Christian had enjoyed a night in the House Beautiful, resting in the chamber looking out towards the east, Bunyan's Pilgrim went down into the Valley of Humiliation to fight his way through to peace and power.

> Let no man think that sudden in a minute
> All is accomplished and the work is done;—
> Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it
> Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun.

This, too, is true of the Christian Church. First a vision of the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, then the long years and centuries of sacrifice and service. The dream has always been hovering on the margin of the Church's consciousness. Long, long centuries ago that dream and vision came to the people of God. 'And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' That vision still lures us on. Sometimes it eludes us but it ever leads through disappointed hopes and defeated purposes to victory. It is a dream, but it is more than a dream. It is a vision of a warless world, of a Christ-controlled world. The Christian Church presses forward like Columbus, who sailed on and on, until that which was without form and void, took form and became a reality.

Then pale and worn, he kept his deck,
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night
Of all dark nights! And then a speck—
A light! a light! a light! a light!
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.
He gained a world; he gave that world
Its grandest lesson: 'On! sail on!'

The Christian Church has always been a dreamer of dreams. It has always been following what the world calls illusions, but it has found its success along the line of adventure, for faith is life's greatest adventure. Speaking of the progress of the British Empire, General Gordon once said, 'England owes more to her adventurers than to her statesmen.' Whatever judgment we may pass on that statement certainly it is true that the Church owes much to her adventurers, to the men and women who loved not their life, but gave themselves as hostages for the faith which meant everything to them. All along the way there has been risk and hazard and adventure, and the days of adventure are not yet over. The vision still lures us on. The lands beyond still call and say 'Come over and help us.' In one of the daily papers of India there appeared this Hindu prayer:

Weary are we of empty creeds
Of deafening calls to fruitless deeds:

Weary of priests who cannot pray,
Of guides who show no man the way;
Weary of rites wise men condemn,
Of worship linked with lust and shame;
Weary of Custom, blind, enthroned,
Of conscience trampled, God disowned;
Weary of men in sections cleft,
Hindu life of love bereft;
Woman debased, no more a queen,
Now knowing what she once hath been;
Weary of babbling about birth
And of mockery men call mirth;
Weary of life not understood,
A battle, not a brotherhood;
Weary of Kali Yuga years,
Freighted with chaos, darkness, fears;
Life is an ill, the sea of births is wide,
And we are weary; who shall be our guide?

Dare we grow weary before we have introduced this lost and seeking world to our Guide? Dare we faint and falter before He is made known to the world for which He died? Shall we be disobedient to the heavenly vision and falter before our dream of a world wholly surrendered to Christ comes true? After the years are gone, will it be left for us to say, 'We saw the vision but it faded out with the setting sun and vanished over the margin of the world!' That, indeed, would be a tragedy.

XIV

THE IMPERCIPIENT

Thomas Hardy

THERE are people who are colour blind. They do not see what others see. Their senses do not respond to the truth and reality of the world about them. They have eyes but they see not. There are people who are tone deaf. To them music is a succession of noises. They have ears but they hear not, and an oratorio is often, as it was for Gladstone, an excruciating experience. There are people who have little or no sense of taste, or possess what we call a depraved taste. There are others who have no social inclinations and seek solitude and shun companionship. The question naturally arises, 'Are there those who lack the religious sense, who are colour blind to the beauties of religion and deaf to the voices of the Spirit?'

Thomas Hardy, the English novelist and poet, pictures such an one and perhaps it is of himself he is speaking. His verses are entitled *The Impercipient,* that is, one who does not perceive spiritual and religious reality. He represents himself as having been present at a cathedral service, hear-

ing the music and observing the hushed and reverent attitude of the worshippers. He himself, however, has had no part in the service. The music and the ritual, the praise and the prayers, have all meant nothing to him. He had been an observer, an onlooker, and beyond the pale of faith. He found no answering response in his nature to what others found to be a quickening influence. Faith to him was only a fantasy, and religious hope a mirage. So turning away from the cathedral and its impressive service he gave voice to his disappointment,

That with this bright believing band
I have no claim to be,
That faiths by which my comrades stand,
Seem fantasies to me,
And mirage-mists their Shining Land
Is a strange destiny.

It is not that this unresponsive, unperceiving worshipper is cynical. He is only colour blind. He does not see. He does not understand. He does not deny reality to those who do see and hear and understand; but as for him, his eyes are closed and he finds nothing corresponding to what others find. Religion has been a reality to men of all tribes and tempers, yet it finds no response in him. Why is it? Why does he not see? Why does he not understand? Why is he 'the impercipient'?

We can travel the world over and find temples where men pray in every land. Man is known as a religious animal. Is it possible there may be one in whom religion awakens no response?

Why that my soul should be consigned
To Infelicity,
Why always I must feel as blind
To sights my brethren see,
Why joys they have found I cannot find,
Abides a mystery.

Such a confession should lead, he says, not to censure but should awake an answering response of charity. God speaks to other men. Why does He not speak to him? Is he to blame that he is not religious? Like Job he seems to cry out: 'Oh, that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! . . . Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.'

Since heart of mine knows not that ease
Which they know; since it be
That He who breathes All's-Well to these
Breathes no All's-Well to me,
My lack might move their sympathies
And Christian charity.

I am like a gazer who should mark
An inland company
Standing up fingered with, 'Hark! hark!
The glorious distant sea!'
And feel, 'Alas, 'tis but yon dark
And wind-swept pine to me!'

Although he does not see, he is sensible of the fact that others see. He is not indifferent; he is dissatisfied. His heart is not at rest. He is neither an atheist nor an agnostic, but a seeker after God, and if he had a vote he would vote to make religion true. He is like one who is seeking rest and finds none.

It is an interesting self-examination, reverent and yet very honest, and religion above everything else should be honest. Because of his honesty Job who himself was " impercipient " came at last to understand.

Yet I would bear my shortcomings
With meet tranquillity,
But for the charge that blessèd things,
I'd liefer not have be.
O, doth a bird deprived of wings
Go earth-bound willfully!
Enough! As yet disquiet clings
About us. Rest shall we.

What can be said to such an one? Perhaps there are others like him who find what warms the hearts of their comrades leaves them cold. They are col-

our blind to the beauty of spiritual reality. They are deaf to the heavenly harmonies. They are unresponsive to the glories of the unseen. What can we say concerning such, and are there people who can be excused as having within them no religious affections and no spiritual response?

If we will follow the teaching of the New Testament the first answer to be made to the question raised is, that Hardy does not present an exceptional, but an average and natural experience. It is an experience that is reflected on every page of the New Testament. Christianity teaches that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are spiritually discerned. The wisdom of God is a mystery and is not discovered by the philosophers of our universities and colleges. The unspiritual man rejects the truths of the Spirit of God; to him they are sheer folly for he cannot understand them and the reason is that they must be read with the spiritual eye.

There is in the life of Jesus a very remarkable and interesting record of an experience which illustrates the colour-blindness and the tone-deafness in our ordinary humanity. In the crisis of His career a deputation came out of the Gentile world saying to one of His followers: 'Sir, we would see Jesus.' It was a prophecy of the time when the nations would turn to the Gospel for light and leading, and in the emotional ecstasy of

that hour Christ's claim was verified by a voice from heaven. The multitude that stood by heard the voice but said it thundered. Others, hearing but not understanding, said 'an angel hath spoken to him,' but Jesus said 'this voice hath not come for my sake but for your sakes.' To some the voice of God was only thunder upon the horizon. To others, it was only unmeaning and mystical voices speaking out of the silence, but to Him who had ears to hear and a heart to understand it was the voice of God that spoke. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

It requires a magnet to detect the presence of metal. We may say, for example, that iron is magnetically discerned. It requires imagination to appreciate poetry. We may say poetry, to be discerned, must have a poetically discerning mind. It is true in every apartment of the mind. Jenny Lind writes of the day and the hour when she became 'artistically alive.' The appreciation of music was suddenly born within her. To appreciate beauty one must have his eyes open to the things that are lovely. Blind eyes cannot see beauty, neither can blind eyes see God. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

> The Spring blew trumpets of colour;
> Her green sang in my brain—
> I heard a blind man groping
> 'Tap—tap' with his cane;

I pitied him in his blindness;
But can I boast, 'I see'?
Perhaps there walks a spirit
Close by, who pities me,—

A spirit who hears me tapping
The five-sensed cane of mind
Amid such unguessed glories—
That I am worse than blind.

Enlarging this theme, we conclude that the religious sense may be cultivated. One may travel the world over and find evidences of religious faith and spiritual experience in every land and in every age. Beneath the agnosticism of the poet's verse there breathes religious aspiration and the discontent of the spirit that craves satisfaction and rest. The very unrest of life calls for the satisfaction which religion can give, for underneath all the movings of our personality there is the life of the Spirit that calls for spiritual fellowship. The heart is hungry and the spirit is thirsty for that which the world cannot give. The quest after God is the surest evidence that He Himself has inspired the search. Luther Burbank, who did so much in the realm of beauty and usefulness, tells us that he worked no miracle in nature but merely having faith in the forces of life, and relying upon the processes of nature, by patience that never failed, he brought forth the creations that cause men to admire and wonder.

Do we act in the realm of the spirit as Burbank acted in the realm of nature? Do we take for granted the processes of the divine life? By patience and unrelenting experiment we may put ourselves in the way of the life of the Spirit and move out into the atmosphere where we can breathe the larger life of the spiritual world. How can men have spiritual experiences in the tainted atmosphere of worldliness? Above the timber line, beyond the frontier of the forest, upon the heights of the mountain where the snows fall in eternal whiteness, a little tree, twisted and stunted, was found having twenty-eight rings to represent twenty-eight years of bitter struggle against the thin atmosphere of the heights where it had its dwelling place. Down on the slopes that same stunted and dwarfed thing would have grown into a mighty giant, tossing its plumes in the glory of an exuberant growth. Many a man whose spiritual life is dwarfed in an attitude of cynicism and critical intellectualism would flower into the loveliness of a religious faith if he but gave himself the advantage of living in a sympathetic religious atmosphere.

One thing more needs to be said: The religious sense which belongs to every little child may be lost through neglect. The most wonderful thing about humanity is the yearning and craving of the spirit after the ideal. There are thousands of men

who, if they spoke the truth, would tell us that they have succeeded in silencing voices that once spoke to them. The Spirit of God does not always strive with men. Through lack of use the powers with which God has endowed us may fall away.

The classic example of this truth is the life of Charles Darwin, the eminent scientist. It is a judgment which he, himself, passed upon his own life. 'Up to the age of thirty,' he says, 'or beyond it, poetry of many kinds, such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. . . . Pictures gave me considerable, and music very great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry. I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music. . . . I retain some taste for fine scenery, but it does not cause me the exquisite delight which it formerly did. . . . There is a law of atrophy in the spiritual world. My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts. . . . If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would

thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature.'

What happened to Darwin in the matter of his æsthetic sense happens also with regard to the spiritual nature of man. We decline to speculate on what the ultimate end of such an experience will be. We do not pretend to know the limits of God's magnanimous goodness, but we certainly see working out before our very eyes the laws of life. It is not possible for a man to escape if he neglects either his body or his spirit. Before he knows it he has passed the dead line. He becomes colour blind to the beauty of holiness and deaf to the voices of the angels, and the tragedy dramatized in the Book of Proverbs is reënacted. 'I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.'

XV

THE LORD GOD PLANTED A GARDEN

DOROTHY FRANCES GURNEY

THE Bible story begins and ends in a garden. A garden is a place of rest, a place of beauty, a place of loveliness. It is in a garden God walks in the cool of the day, for beauty is His dwelling place. 'His dwelling is in the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air and the blue sky and in the mind of man.' Wherever God is, there is beauty. That truth is reflected again and again in the Old Testament. It was out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, that God shined. Perhaps we have not made enough of beauty in our religious thinking. We have inherited from our Puritan ancestry a taste for substantial realities, and we have neglected too much the things that are lovely and of good report, forgetting that strength and beauty are eternally wedded and that loveliness is the garment of the Eternal.

Nature itself is God's glorious apparel and serves as a partial revelation of His character. We read that John Calvin lived his life among the glories of the Swiss Alps but never saw them. We read

that Tauler, the mystic, covered his eyes with his cap lest his spiritual meditations should be disturbed by the violets. Beauty and loveliness are everywhere apparent and God reveals His presence against the background of nature's majestic glories. It was on the mountain in the quiet of the night that our Lord was transfigured and revealed Himself in radiant loveliness. The law was given to Moses amid the glory and majesty of Mount Sinai, and the starry heavens became a temple in which Old Testament saints sang praises to the Eternal. It was in a garden in the cool of the day that God walked and talked with His children, and in all the world there is no place so inspiring, so full of beauty as a garden where life and loveliness whisper their messages of joy and peace. God is not only in His heaven, He is in everything that lives.

> There is part of the sun in an apple,
> There is part of the moon in a rose,
> There is part of the flaming Pleiades in
> everything that grows.
>
> Out of the vast comes nearness,
> For the God whose love we sing
> Lends a little of His heaven to
> every living thing.

There is nothing in the Bible more attractive than the story of the Garden of Eden. It is not a story to be legislated about but to be lived by and

interpreted by those who have hearts to understand and eyes to see. To walk in that garden is to walk not only with God but to walk with little children in the paths of innocency, by crystal streams that make glad the heart of humanity, for life, when it is right with God, is like a garden and there righteousness and peace kiss each other. Dorothy Frances Gurney has put the story into lovely verse:

The Lord God planted a garden
In the first white days of the world,
And He set there an angel warden
In a garment of light enfurled.

So near to the peace of Heaven,
That the hawk might nest with the wren,
For there in the cool of the even
God walked with the first of men.

And I dream that these garden closes
With their shade and their sun-flecked sod
And their lilies and bowers of roses,
Were laid by the hand of God.

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.

It is all true. It is God who plants the garden. It is God who whispers peace between the hawk

and the wren. It is God who lays the lilies and the bowers of roses. It is God who makes the flowers and the sunshine, and in the garden God walks with His children in the fellowship of eternal love. So life began, and so the saints of God who have found fellowship restored in the Cross have found life to be, and after the long record of sin is ended, Paradise is restored in the new heaven and the new earth—in that redeemed Eden, where flows the river of life clear as crystal.

The poet, however, tells only part of the garden-story. The verses are true, but not wholly true; for instead of being nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth, before the story ends Adam and Eve found that they were nearer the heart of a serpent. Instead of walking with God in the cool of the day they held fellowship in the garden with hypocrisy and deceit, with lies and shame, and Eden became the background of life's greatest tragedy. It is often so. Cardinal Wolsey walked in the king's garden and held fellowship with royalty and rank, with the glories of position and power; but he found that he was nearer the heart of treachery than he was to the heart of God, and before his death confessed that had he served his God with half the zeal with which he had served his king he would not, in his old age, have been left naked to his enemies. Nero lived and walked in the royal gardens of Rome, but against the

beauty and loveliness of the Eternal City he made bonfires of the bodies of the Christians who refused him the allegiance of their hearts, and the gardens of Rome became scenes of persecution, the record of which still stains the pages of history.

The story of the Garden of Eden gives the lie to that form of religious and moral reform which asserts that all men need is a healthy environment—a residence in a garden. In our day there is much talk about environment, about helpful and healthful surroundings, about the redemption that comes through trees and flowers and gardens and bowers of beauty. We have no word to utter against such a philosophy, for we cannot have things too beautiful in this world. God made the world beautiful; it is man who has succeeded in making it ugly. Think of the beauty that once must have been resident along the rivers beside which we live, and think of the hideous ugliness which has its abiding place there now!

God would have life like a garden, but to keep life like a garden we must dwell with beauty and loveliness in our own souls. Gardens and trees and flowers and the kiss of the sun will not keep a life beautiful and serene. Something more is needed than a garden, and one may be nearer the heart of evil and passion and pride and vanity in a garden than anywhere else on earth. It was in the very presence of the loveliness and beauty of the life

of Christ that Judas cultivated treachery and developed the spirit of avarice and selfishness that wrecked his life. John Bunyan, in *Pilgrim's Progress,* portrays the character of one of his pilgrims who passed over the road through the enchanted country, dwelling for a time in Beulah Land where the air was very sweet and pleasant and the singing of birds was heard continually and where flowers were ever blooming. But that same pilgrim goes down to destruction from the very gate of heaven.

To be near God's heart one must find fellowship with God, not in circumstances alone, or in nature alone, but in the holy of holies of one's own heart. One is always suspicious of those who excuse themselves from worship and secret prayer by saying that they are nearer God's heart in a garden. They forget that the idolatry and immorality and shamelessness of paganism were cultured and carried on in the groves and gardens of Israel and Greece and Rome.

One cannot imagine a better environment than Eden. One could not picture a situation where character might have been more easily cultured and holiness attained than that which surrounded Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Yet the outcome of that experiment was failure and tragedy. On the other hand, one cannot imagine a more dangerous and desolate place than a wilderness, but it was in the wilderness that victory and triumph

came and Paradise was regained. Life began in the innocency of Eden, and there the serpent entered and sin shadowed the world. But Paradise was regained in the wilderness of Judæa where Christ was alone with the forces of evil and with the angels. Read the story of our Lord's temptation and victory as it is given in the Gospel of St. Mark. 'And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.' What a wilderness it was! Barren and shelterless and lonely, no flowers, no cooling shade, no spring bursting from the rock; nature seemed menacing and threatening, but there Jesus walked with God.

It has often been so. Men have often been nearer God's heart in the desert than in a garden. It was in a desert in the land of Midian that Moses saw the glory of God in the flaming bush. It was in the wilderness that Elijah was touched by angels' hands and fed with the very bread of heaven. It was in the loneliness of his exile and banishment in the bleak and barren coasts of Patmos that John saw the living Christ, walking in the midst of the churches, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, whose voice was as the voice of many waters.

Years ago a flower show was held where the

flowers exhibited were those grown only in the city of London. It is one thing to grow flowers in protected conservatories and under conditions that bring beauty to perfection; but it is another thing to grow roses and lilies in shadowed courts, in narrow backyards, on tenement window-sills, and on the tiles and flat roofs of apartment buildings. We read that even Queen Victoria came to see this flower display, for there, in that strange revealing of beauty, was manifested the triumph over the mean and sordid conditions of life. The most delicate and precious of our flowers, as one of our Canadian writers has pointed out, grow in the deep recesses and shadows of the canyons; and in like manner the flowers of the Spirit, faith and love and joy and gentleness, grow where there has been suffering and sorrow, loneliness and obscurity.

John Milton showed his understanding of the divine revelation when he closed *Paradise Regained* with Jesus' victory in the wilderness. There, in the wilderness—alone—Christ saw the shadow of a mighty cross and in His victory Paradise was restored. Because of His victory the wilderness blossoms as the rose and the desert becomes a garden in which grows the Tree of Life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. This is why the Bible closes amidst the beauty and glory of a new heaven and a new earth. For redemption is not complete until the beauty

that is within corresponds to the beauty that is without, until life made beautiful by His redemption lives in the loveliness and light of a redeemed world. When humanity is born again in the image of the invisible God, then Paradise is regained and all things are made new.

'To make things new,' says George Matheson, 'is not the same as to make new things. To make new things is the work of the hand; to make things new is the work of the heart. Whenever one sits upon the throne of the heart, all things are made new. They are made so without changing a line, without altering a feature. Enthrone in your heart an object of love, and you have renewed the universe. You have given an added note to every bird, a fresh joy to every brook, a fairer tint to every flower.' Enthrone Christ in your heart, and you will have a new heaven and a new earth.

XVI

THE MYSTIC

Cale Young Rice

THE quest of the soul is one of the facts of life. The search for the Unknown has been continuous since time began. Altars to the Unknown God have been erected in every age and in every land, and men everywhere have felt after the sacred secret, if haply they could make the glad discovery. They have sought for it more than for gold hidden in the hills.

History has never wanted for adventurers, who have ridden to the end of thought in their search for eternal truth. We find the quest in the *Old Testament,* and nowhere is it voiced more persuasively than in the plaintive words of the *Book of Job.*

> 'Oh that I knew where I might find him!
> That I might come even to his seat! . . .
> Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
> And backward, but I cannot perceive him:
> On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him:
> He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.'

It finds frequent expression in the *Psalms.*

'As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.'

It is everywhere vocal in the prophets and poets:

'Canst thou by searching find out God?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?
It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do?
Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know?
The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
And broader than the sea.'

The same spirit of wistfulness is in modern literature. It is a characteristic note of recent poetry. An authority on the subject says that our best modern poetry is filled with a sense of homesickness, appearing as a continual quest for truth and beauty. It is this quest that is given significant expression in the verses entitled *The Mystic* by Cale Young Rice. The poet represents himself as riding the thoughts of his mind in swift pursuit after the divine mystery.

There is a quest that calls me
In nights when I am lone,
The need to ride where the ways divide
The Known from the Unknown.
I mount what thought is near me
And soon I reach the place,
The tenuous rim where the Seen grows dim
And the Sightless hides its face.

I have ridden the wind,
I have ridden the sea,
I have ridden the moon and stars.
I have set my feet in the stirrup seat
Of a comet coursing Mars.
And everywhere
Thro' the earth and air
My thought speeds, lightning-shod,
It comes to a place where checking pace
It cries, 'Beyond lies God!'

One can almost hear the anxious beating of the hoofs, as they speed on, to the very rim of the universe. Imagination trembles on the margin of mystery and seeks an answer to the question 'Does God really lie beyond, or is there only emptiness and vacancy?' Skeptics have stood in their grief and peered into the darkness, calling aloud to the silence, and the only answer they have received has been the echo of their wailing cry. Is that all? Is the poet really justified in saying 'Beyond lies God'? Is life just the spreading of the canvas without picture or painting? What, then, is the use of preparing the colours and spreading the canvas, if there is no picture and no painting? We feel that we are not only reaching but also grasping and our confidence in our own nature and in the universe is such that we cannot think we are always and everywhere deceived. It is God Himself who has placed eternity in the heart and lured us on to seek Him. The mind is not satisfied to rest in

negatives and presses on in unceasing quest, for out of the silence the soul believes it hears a voice that calls.

It calls me out of the darkness,
It calls me out of sleep,
'Ride! ride! for you must, to the end of Dust!'
It bids—and on I sweep
To the wide outposts of Being,
Where there is Gulf alone—
And thro' a Vast that was never passed
I listen for Life's tone.

I have ridden the wind,
I have ridden the night,
I have ridden the ghosts that flee
From the vaults of death like a chilling breath
Over eternity.
And everywhere
Is the world laid bare—
Ether and star and clod—
Until I wind to its brink and find
But the cry, 'Beyond lies God!'

The question arises, whether it is a call or only an urge of the spirit. Is it a sense of something merely subjective, or is there something or some one out and beyond us that issues the call? Is God only a 'projection' of the mind, or is He a reality and is our seeking after Him the surest evidence of His ever living and abiding presence? If the so-called projections of the lower nature feel

out and find their satisfaction in objective reality, why should we deny a corresponding reality to the promptings of the spirit? The call that comes from the lower world receives an answering response in us. So does the call of the highest. In each case the response is to reality, for the quest after goodness, truth and beauty is evidence of something that lies far beyond our subjective moods.

It calls me and ever calls me!
And vainly I reply,
'Fools only ride where the ways divide
What Is from the Whence and Why!'
I'm lifted into the saddle
Of thoughts too strong to tame
And down the deeps and over the steeps
I find—ever the same.

I have ridden the wind,
I have ridden the stars,
I have ridden the force that flies
With far intent thro' the firmament
And each to each allies.
And everywhere
That a thought may dare
To gallop, mine has trod—
Only to stand at last on the strand
Where just beyond lies God.

We hear the call, when we think deeply concerning the nature of the universe. Its vastness over-

whelms us. Following the light from sun and stars, we are led to the very margin of the infinite. We live in a world where the paths are measured only by light years, and so distant is the sun and the stars that flame in the far-flung clusters of the starry heavens that, if one of the most distant should be snuffed out, it would require two hundred thousand years for a ray of light, travelling at the speed of six million million miles a year, to bring us tidings of the disaster. Yet the universe is not infinite, but is held in the hollow of the hand of Him who said, 'Let there be light.'

It is not alone the unity of the world in its greatness, but also the unity of the world in its littleness that wraps our thought in mystery. The physicist is telling us that the smallest thing known, the atom, is itself a universe with its own system of sun and stars, keeping their exact orbits, as in the case of the planets. Like the universe the minutely invisible atom, 'a house not made with hands,' is so delicately ordered that one of our greatest astronomers has said, 'It transcends so far anything that could be produced by any infinitely magnified model of the human form, that we must recognize that only a spiritual power can lie behind it.' We do not wonder that scientists, who are ever gazing into mystery and standing on the holy ground of the unknown, are reverent beyond the dreams of men who muckrake in the rubbish of

the street. Riding their thoughts out into the mystery of the night, they hold the faith that ' Beyond lies God.'

We are face to face with the same mystery and hear the same call, when we think deeply concerning the fact of sin. And think we must. We cannot avoid thinking about the problem of evil and, when our thoughts lead us out, we are brought again to the margin of the eternal. Sooner or later we stand in the presence of sin, our sin, the sin of which we have been guilty and say 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned.'

Every one of us knows the certainty of that fact, and all the great dramas of literature which have analyzed conscience have brought men face to face with God. In Macbeth we are left in the silence, alone with God and the trembling soul of a man to whom sin had come home. The name of God slips into the record and all the perfumes of Arabia are not sufficient to sweeten life again. In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* the offender is led at last to confession, for the call of conscience ' bayed like bloodhounds in his blood,' until he came before the great white throne of God, and there his sin was yielded up ' not with reluctance, but with a joy unutterable.' In Dostoieffsky's *Crime and Punishment*, perhaps the greatest of all analytical studies of the problem of evil, in almost every chapter the criminal is brought face to face with God,

and at last, in surrender to God, he found relief in penitence.

The eternal quest for peace, in the midst of the evil of the world, leads men on through doubt and darkness, because of the thought that beyond lies God. Robert Browning has a little poem entitled *The Worst of It*. What is the worst of it? There has been deception; there has been ruin; there have been broken vows and lost friendships, but the worst of all is 'What will God say?' Conscience in the end finds a man and there is no escape. To find security we must flee into the very presence of Holiness itself. The soul cries out 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' And the answer is 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

We hear the call, when we think deeply on the subject of goodness. Virtue is even more mysterious in its origin and continuance than vice. Goodness is more difficult to understand than evil. The *New Testament* speaks about the mystery of iniquity, but what shall we say regarding the mystery of virtue? Why are men good? Why is goodness alluring? Why does the ideal lead us on? Why cannot we rest satisfied with things as they are? Why do we thrill to the heroic and fall in love with the true and the good and the beautiful? Why do we respond to the appeal to love the things that are lovely and of good report? Why is there

a response within us to the higher realities beyond the reach of argument and of criticism? It is an interesting subject. The call to the things that make for overthrow we can understand. The drift is towards the rocks. But why are we ever pushing onward and upward, unsatisfied, feeling after goodness, if haply we may find it? One good man puts to flight the whole army of agnostics. Whence came he and why is he? There is darkness shadowing every sin but there is a heavenly light illuminating every thought of holiness, every deed of love.

> Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
> A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
> A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
> And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
> As old and new at once as nature's self,
> To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
> Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring
> Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
> The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.
> There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
> This good God,—what He could do, if He would,
> Would, if He could—then must have done long since.

To look upon the beauty of a rose, to gaze into the face of a sleeping child, to feel the kiss of motherhood upon the cheek, to thrill to the touch

of sympathy upon the hand, to listen to whispering music, to face purity in the countenance of age, to do all these is to stand in the presence of the Divine and behold the reflected image of God Himself. With the Mystic we feel, somehow, that beyond lies God.

This wistfulness of the soul must find reality, or it will lose itself in the dismal swamp of sentimental mysticism. We cannot rest in illusions, and a mysticism that has no relation to personality will not satisfy the heart. We must see and know, and in the *New Testament* we do see, and we do know. There is little or no wistfulness in the *New Testament*. There we see God in the face of Jesus Christ, and the Wise Men, who came out of the East, seeking and searching, asking 'Where is He?' received their answer. Before all the altars erected to the unknown gods the Christian stands and announces the fact that God has spoken. He says to all seekers, 'What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.'

In Jesus Christ the search comes to an end, because in Him we find God. This is not an argument. It is the announcement of an historic fact. The only God we know is the God who has been revealed to us in the Scriptures. For us He answers all questions in the world and out of it. He draws aside the veil and we see into the mystery. Robert Browning, the greatest Christian poet of all

the poets, spoke of himself as ' a man who was sure of God.' He had puzzled about many things, but of one thing he was sure. He was sure of God. He possessed a religious assurance that was to be envied, and a friend once asked him about this Christian certainty. The poet answered him by quoting three lines from his own writings.

> That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose,
> Become my universe that feels and knows.

After a moment's pause he added, ' That face is the face of Christ, and that is how I feel about it.' This is the true way to feel, for the sense of mystery, which is all about us, is satisfied when we see Him.

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